REASONS
FOR
UNITARIANISM;
OR, THE
Primitive Chriſtian Doctrine.

ADDRESSED TO

THE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION OF THE INHABITANTS OF THE DIOCESE OF ST. DAVID's.

WITH A

PREFACE,

CONTAINING ANIMADVERSIONS ON THE BISHOP OF ST. DAVID's CHARGE.

AND AN

APPENDIX,

IN WHICH THE DIFFERENT ARIAN TENETS ARE STATED AND EXAMINED.

BY A WELSH FREEHOLDER.

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."
JESUS CHRIST.

"Y neb ſydd ganddo gluſtiau i wrando, gwrandawed."
JESU GRIST.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

IT is a ſingular circumſtance, that the Clergyman, to whom the Letter to the Welſh Freeholder has been generally aſcribed, abſolutely denies his being the author of it. If this Clergyman be not the author, and he be, as he declares he is, of the dioceſe of St. David's, the world may be ſaid to have witneſſed, in one inſtance at leaſt, a perſon in an exalted ſituation reduced to the hard neceſſity of becoming his own panegyriſt.

DEDICATION

TO THE ENEMIES OF

RELIGIOUS IMPROVEMENTS.

GENTLEMEN,

FROM a Philoſopher, who has given currency to a number of invaluable truths, we learn, that a good cauſe is ſerved nearly as much by perſons of your deſcription, as by its friends. Feeling this ſentiment, inſtead of regarding you, with averſion and rancour, as the patrons of error, I can view you, with peculiar complacency, as the benefactors of the world. Though you appear as thoſe who would perpetuate and extend the empire of darkneſs, I eſteem you as thoſe by whoſe means its reign is ſhortened,

and its territories are diſmembered. Though you come forward as the foes of light, I feel high reſpect for you, as thoſe by whom inlets are made, by which it is introduced into parts and corners, which, in its ordinary courſe, it would be long ere it would penetrate.

My object in dedicating this tract to you, is not ſo much to ſolicit your patronage, as to remonſtrate with you upon ſome indecencies of behaviour with which your conduct of late has been chargeable. I refer particularly to the bad temper which appears in all you do. Remember how much this derogates from the credit which is due to good intentions and upright views. You conſider yourſelves, and you would have yourſelves looked upon by others, as the ſupporters of truth. Reflect on the honourable diſtinction you claim, on the conduct which is conſiſtent with it, the meekneſs, the gentleneſs, and the forbearance, which become it. Whether it does, or does not belong to you, as you think it does, your obligation

obligation to demean yourſelves ſuitably to it, and the guilt of acting otherwiſe, are no leſs than if it actually did. Were you to obſerve this rule, you would be held by GOD, and by enlightened men, in nearly as high eſtimation as thoſe who fight under the banner of truth.

Be pleaſed to weigh ſeriouſly and attentively what it is that conſiſtency with the character which you aſſume, requires of you. It calls upon you to conduct hoſtilities in a fair and manly manner; to combat our arguments, and to attempt the overthrow of our notions; but to do nothing to the prejudice of our perſons; to give no ground to the abandoned and the profligate to think, that, by inſulting and injuring us, they give you pleaſure.

Lay no ſhackles in the way of ingenuous youth. Do not diſcourage, do not ridicule, if you will not foſter, that love of truth which is ſo ſtrong at their time of life. State to them as many rational conſiderations as

you pleaſe; but regard it as the height of uſurpation to bias their judgments by any unfair methods. Exhort them to be diligent, ſedulous enquirers, but let their opinions be the reſult of their own convictions. As the profeſſed defenders of truth, this conduct is incumbent upon you; you cannot follow any other, without offering high indignity to the cauſe for which you would have us believe you contend.

Obſerve how the voluntary unſhackled exertions of corporeal ſtrength have beautified the material world, and added to the comforts and conveniences of life. Let the mental powers be ſet equally at liberty, and be aſſured that ſimilar good effects will follow. In conſequence of this, every noble quality, every good diſpoſition, every worthy feeling of man, will receive that direction in which, agreeably to the intention of the Creator, its full force will be employed in making the individual and the world happy.

PREFACE.

THE call for a ſecond edition of his letter to the Biſhop of St. David's, made the author of it conclude, that ſome attention had been excited to the ſubjects to which it referred. Judgin as he did, that no opportunity is to be ſlighted of communicating information on matters confeſſedly of ſuch importance as thoſe of religion are, he formed the reſolution of taking occaſion from an angry and petulant anſwer to the above letter, to ſtate and defend the principles of what he conceives to be the true Chriſtian Doctrine. Within the limits of ſuch a publication he found himſelf unable to include any conſiderable portion of what it was his wiſh to ſubmit to the impartial and diſpaſſionate conſideration of his readers. He felt inclined to attempt it in a publication like the preſent. This inclination he became the more bent upon following, in conſequence of hearing no tidings of the Biſhop's charge making its appearance. He made his intention public. Preſently after, was announced the publication of the Charge, upon which he had

pledged

pledged himſelf to animadvert, if no one more able took it up. He thus ſomewhat inadvertently committed himſelf for two undertakings; one of which is, perhaps, as much as a juſt ſurvey of his leiſure would have warranted him to attempt. He had no alternative, but to fulfil both in the beſt manner he was able. One, however, he has in ſome degree made to give way to the other. It is thus that he has dealt with the Charge. To the *Reaſons* he has devoted moſt of his ſpare hours;—hours that were, however, broke in upon, much more than he had any grounds to expect. Of the Charge he conceives, that had it not been for his promiſe, it had few or no claims, as it now appears, to the kind of attention here paid to it.

In it we meet, however, with a few poſitions that are highly curious. The firſt that I ſhall notice is, that "Science is the object of natural reaſon; "religious truth of faith." We are alſo told that "Faith, like the natural faculties, may be improved by exerciſe;" that it is "a diſtinct gift of GOD." I ſuppoſe his Lordſhip would be underſtood to mean "a gift of GOD" in a ſenſe different from that in which other bleſſings are the gifts of GOD. We alſo learn that it is by faith that "men can receive "the diſcoveries of revelation, the firſt principles, "as well as the moſt ſublime truths." See p. 15.

Are

Are we to conclude from this account, that in his Lordſhip's idea the natural faculties have nothing to do with the diſcoveries of revelation, that in matters of religion the natural faculties are totally unemployed? This I believe is the firſt inſtance of the uſe of reaſon being wholly diſcarded, in matters of religion, from the Engliſh epiſcopal bench: and as religion, according to his Lordſhip, is no way the object of reaſon, he may perhaps think that this faculty is diſqualified for being employed in any way about religion, and therefore it may be in vain to *reaſon* with his Lordſhip upon the ſubject. This will ſerve as a clue to make out his Lordſhip's meaning, when in one of his letters he triumphs over Dr. Prieſtley as a foiled polemic; not foiled, all the world knows, by any thing in which reaſon and argument are concerned, but foiled by means which are only manageable by this new faculty, faith; the ſole poſſeſſion of which, in this capacity, I truſt, is confined to his Lordſhip and a few honeſt enthuſiaſts. I cannot, however, help aſking, will his Lordſhip ſay, that the evidences of religion are not, as much as the ſciences, the objects of the natural faculties? Will not a man, from reading the Scriptures, with none but ordinary helps; be able to make out what are the doctrines of revelation, thoſe doctrines on which piety, and virtue, and the hopes of immortality, are founded? If his Lordſhip anſwers theſe queſtions in the affirmative, I ſhould

be

be glad to know, how we are to diſtinguiſh his Lordſhip's ſentiments from thoſe of the Quakers, or of what uſe the Scriptures are? For if faith is communicated ſupernaturally, why might not the propoſitions upon which this faith is to be exerciſed be communicated at the ſame time? The Biſhop then, if I underſtand him, repreſents the Scriptures, as it were, written in characters which men naturally are incapable of decyphering, that before they can do this a miraculous gift muſt be conferred upon them. Is there any ground in Scripture for this repreſentation? Surely there is none in reaſon. Reaſon would cheriſh the expectation, that God would make thoſe doctrines, which are of univerſal concernment, ſufficiently plain for all to comprehend, and convey them in language which all would be able to underſtand.

"Faith," the Biſhop further declares, "is the "firſt principle of that communion between the "believer's ſoul and the divine ſpirit, on which "the whole of our ſpiritual life depends."

On this paſſage I am unable to comment. There was a time when I was a believer in this communion of which the Biſhop ſpeaks, and when I thought I experienced it, and therefore ſuppoſed I knew the nature of it; and that, I doubt not, with as much reaſon as any which Dr. Horſley may have for ſuppoſing that he has a knowledge of it, I however

I however never heard of the *principles* of this communion, nor of their enumeration in order, whether that of their relative importance, or that of their priority of operation. This communion between the believer's ſoul and the divine ſpirit, the Biſhop, in another place, if I miſtake not, calls "a myſterious commerce" between the ſame parties. How can it then be reſolved into its principles? For is it not of the eſſence of what is myſterious to have no known principles? Wherein lies the myſtery of the thing, if its principles are known?

I was well nigh going to ſay that the whole of this repreſentation of faith conſtitutes a new dogma; but who knows that it may not turn out to be the conceit of ſome old ſchoolman or reformer, as did that reſpecting the generation of the ſon, which Dr. Prieſtley aſcribed to the invention of our Biſhop? It may be that the orthodoxy of Biſhop Horſley, like the whiggiſm of Burke, is nothing new. And indeed, if we are to look for the origin of abſurd and ſlaviſh notions, where more likely to find them than in the infancy of the world? Strange muſt be the make of that mind, that is capable of conſtructing new ones of this ſort, in the preſent age!

The next thing to which I ſhall advert, is the Biſhop's account of morality. He exhorts his Clergy

Clergy againſt confining themſelves to the preaching up morality; not morality in the ſenſe in which it is uſually underſtood, but a morality of the Biſhop's own coining; not Chriſtian, no, nor yet ſtoical, nor platonic morality; a morality which, except in one inſtance, falls ſhort of that of my Lord Cheſterfield. A morality which allows people "to covet;" which exerciſes no controul over "the ſecret meditations "of the mind, and the ſilent deſires of the heart;" which impoſes no reſtraint upon "the ſenſuality of "the imagination, and the private prurience of "appetite;" which does not extend to "the ſecret "energies of the mind;" which does not "require "the obedience of the inner man;" which does not enjoin the "love of enemies," "the forgiveneſs of injuries," or "the giving of alms to the poor." "A morality which" it is ſaid, "careth for none of theſe things." Poor morality! ſhe is here hardly dealt with indeed. Is not this to ſtrip her of her faireſt ornaments, and then to abuſe her for the want of them? If the Clergy confine themſelves to the preaching of this kind of morality, it is to be hoped, that they will liſten to the Biſhop's remonſtrances.

He next makes the Clergy give a very good account of Morality, repreſenting it "as preciſely of "the ſame extent with practical Religion, embra-"cing every branch of man's duty to God, his "neighbour,

" neighbour, and himſelf." He charges this, with being not only an inſignificant propoſition, but one that miſleads. It hardly deſerves this cenſure, ſuppoſing it to be merely illuſtrative, and to conſiſt of two definitions of the ſame thing, if the terms of one definition be more clear to any, than thoſe uſed in the other. Nor can it miſlead, if the Clergy are careful to define their terms, as they are here made to do.

Had it been his Lordſhip's intention, by this long-ſpun harangue about morality, to induce the Clergy, not to make their ſermons reſemble mere moral eſſays, I ſhould not have controverted the goodneſs of the deſign. Had his Lordſhip exhorted them to illuſtrate the Scriptures in their ſermons after the manner of Dr. Clarke, I ſhould have been happy to have coincided with him in opinion. Had he adviſed them to make it more an object to explain the ſacred writings, by the aid of approved critics and commentators, and thereby to form in their hearers a diſpoſition to peruſe them more, I ſhould have rejoiced; but I was grieved to find that this was not the caſe. They are to preach to the people what he calls the peculiar doctrines of revelation, " the Trinity of perſons in the undi-
" vided eſſence of the Godhead;" (How is this a peculiar doctrine of revelation? Have we not been told that it is ſtated in the Parmenides?) " the In-
carnation

" carnation of the ſecond perſon; the expiation of " ſin by the Redeemer's ſufferings and death, the " MYSTERIOUS COMMERCE of the believer's " ſoul with the divine ſpirit." This is the way in which he propoſes to thin the meeting-houſe, and to have the churches thronged. Preaching theſe doctrines with a certain coarſeneſs and vulgarity, we know full well has drawn crowds to churches and to meeting-houſes too. Let him be aſſured, that ſhould the churches be filled upon this plan, the *moralizing Unitarians* will not be deſerted. In this caſe, many of the moſt reſpectable of thoſe who now frequent the church, would be driven to the conventicle. It is not by preaching up the doctrines of the church, that the attendance of the more rational part of the hearers is ſecured; let theſe be preached up, and I am confident that we ſhould have more Unitarian chapels erected, and that thoſe already ſet on foot would be more frequented.

How far his Lordſhip is right in laying down the trinity, the incarnation, and the atonement, as doctrines of revelation, I truſt, will appear from the following tract, in which they are examined. Concerning the myſterious commerce of the believer's ſoul with the divine ſpirit, the reader will find nothing there. Indeed this is a doctrine, or at leaſt a method of expreſſing it, to which I am an utter ſtranger

ſtranger. I apprehend that it is not to be met with in the *Inſtitutes* of *Calvin*; in the *bodies* either of *Uſher*, of *Turretine*, or of *Ridgley*; nor yet in the *marrow* of *Mark* or of *Ames*. If the expreſſion occur in neither of thoſe, it can hardly be orthodox. I ſuſpect that the platonic prelate borrowed the phraſe from the late diſciples of that ſchool, or perhaps from the writings of the Quietiſts, or from thoſe of the more early Moravians.

On firſt caſting my eye on this article in the liſt of Chriſtian doctrines, the following train of thought aroſe in my mind. If the meaneſt of the laity taſte of this myſterious commerce, the clergy muſt poſſeſs a larger ſhare of it; and a ſtill greater portion of it muſt fall to the lot of the ſpiritual father of the clergy. Much of this commerce muſt the pious *Horſley* enjoy! What a curioſity would the particulars of this commerce be from the Biſhop's own mouth! Suppoſing the mathematical club, of which the Biſhop is a member, were to requeſt his Lordſhip to favour them with the particulars of it, how intereſting muſt the account be! To be preſent on ſuch an occaſion would certainly be a higher treat than admiſſion into the Royal Society at the reading of the firſt of *Prieſtley*'s diſcoveries. I truſt that, if his Lordſhip actually holds this commerce, he would feel no reluctance in complying with a requeſt of this kind from ſo reſpectable a body.

The

The Biſhop next palms a diſcovery upon us. He has found out that *Prieſtley* and *Lindſey*, in ſpite of their acknowledged piety and virtuous deportment, are ungodly men. This he makes out, I apprehend, by reaſoning, which he builds on the thirteenth article of his church, and which, put into the ſyllogiſtic form, would run thus: Hereſy is ſin: the religion of *Prieſtley* and *Lindſey* is hereſy: ergo, the religion of *Prieſtley* and *Lindſey* is ſin. Would not this reaſoning have been as coercive in the mouths of the Jewiſh prieſts and rulers, with reſpect to the Apoſtles, when thoſe heretics declared they would obey God rather than man? And would not the Biſhop himſelf be as much expoſed to it, were it to be made uſe of by any of the non-juring Biſhops of *France*, who, rather than ſanction, by their preſence, the encroachments lately made upon popery and arbitrary power, have ſought an aſylum in this country; and who, owing to the humanity of Mr. *Burke*, and of our high Clergy, have found a growing diſpoſition among its inhabitants to ſympathize with them on the occaſion, and to abhor thoſe innovations, in conſequence of which theſe good men ſuffer?

But, before this reaſoning can have any weight, it muſt be firſt proved that all hereſy is ſin; and ſecondly, that the religion of *Prieſtley* and *Lindſey* is hereſy. I have no perſonal knowledge of our prelate;

prelate; thoſe who have, and who are able to contraſt his character with that of Dr. *Prieſtley* and Mr. *Lindſey*, may feel indignant at the indecency of *his* depreciating the known piety and virtue of theſe excellent perſons.

"His Lordſhip farther enjoins it upon his Clergy "to teach, how ſtrictly it is required of the pri- "vate Chriſtian to ſubmit himſelf to thoſe teachers "who are, by due authority, ſet over the people "to watch over their ſouls."

His Lordſhip ought to have explained this *due authority*. He ſhould have informed us whence it was derived, and ſtated the reaſons that made it binding. This not being done, the Methodiſts may ſay, the regular Clergy are miniſters who are impoſed upon us without our choice. The civil magiſtrate makes the biſhops; they are therefore more attentive to him, than to our ſouls. Thoſe biſhops again, or ſome lay patrons, be they Diſſenters or be they infidels, preſent to livings; however, therefore, we may regard the doctrine, or the conduct of theſe men, we will not ſubmit to them on the ground of the exerciſe of their miniſtry being an infringement of our rights. But, ſuppoſing the perſons in queſtion to be leſs refined, and that they attend teachers of their own free choice on account of incapacity for the diſcharge, or the voluntary neglect

neglect of duty in the miniſters of the eſtabliſhment. What is the hazard which a perſon runs, who, from the beſt of motives, endeavours to inſtruct theſe people? I apprehend, if he has (to the utmoſt of his endeavours) *ſhunned, not to declare* to his flock, *the whole counſel of GOD*, and if he has adorned his doctrine by a good life, that at the day of judgment his not having taken his degrees at either of the Univerſities, or his not having been ordained by a biſhop, will not form the leaſt hindrance to his acceptance; will neither ſully his glory, nor diminiſh his reward.

His Lordſhip may call ſuch an one an irregular miniſter: but he ſhould inform us what thoſe principles are, by which he ſhews his own to be a regular one? Is it on the ground of its having been tranſmitted down in an unbroken ſucceſſion from the hands of the apoſtles? But thoſe who make good the beſt claims to be the ſucceſſors of the apoſtles diſclaim all connection with the Engliſh Biſhops, and regard them as heretics and ſchiſmatics. Whatever virtue iſſued from the See of *Rome* to the Engliſh Biſhops, while Popiſh, ceaſed when they became Proteſtants. But ſuppoſing any thing of great value to have made its way through this channel to our prelates, it can have no effect, as ordination, by whom, or whatever be the manner in which it is adminiſtered, is nothing without the

the conſent of the people. Therefore, though the Biſhop were one in this ſucceſſion, not having been called to the exerciſe of his miniſtry by the free ſuffrages of the faithful, he is not a regular Chriſtian miniſter, agreeably to the moſt ancient accounts of ſuch an officer, and the uniform uſage of the primitive church. Before the exhortations of *Clement* and *Ignatius* can be allowed to have any force in the preſent caſe, they muſt be proved to have been delivered in favour of a miniſtry that were not of the people's choice.

Time, I believe, has been, when biſhops were leſs wont to inculcate on their clergy the preaching up theſe abſurd doctrines and high-church tenets. If our pulpits are generally made to ring with diſcourſes on theſe topics, the complexion of the country will no doubt be changed. There is, however, one conſolation, that though liberty, as it would appear from many ſymptoms, be upon the wane in this country, ſhe is riſing in all her glory in other countries, and cheering with her brightneſs and her ſplendour millions of our fellow-creatures.

Had the Biſhop, inſtead of inſiſting upon ſcholaſtic tenets, recommended it to the Parochial Clergy to make diligent reſearches into the mean-

neglect of duty in the miniſters of the eſtabliſhment. What is the hazard which a perſon runs, who, from the beſt of motives, endeavours to inſtruct theſe people? I apprehend, if he has (to the utmoſt of his endeavours) *ſhunned, not to declare* to his flock, *the whole counſel of GOD*, and if he has adorned his doctrine by a good life, that at the day of judgment his not having taken his degrees at either of the Univerſities, or his not having been ordained by a biſhop, will not form the leaſt hindrance to his acceptance; will neither ſully his glory, nor diminiſh his reward.

His Lordſhip may call ſuch an one an irregular miniſter: but he ſhould inform us what thoſe principles are, by which he ſhews his own to be a regular one? Is it on the ground of its having been tranſmitted down in an unbroken ſucceſſion from the hands of the apoſtles? But thoſe who make good the beſt claims to be the ſucceſſors of the apoſtles diſclaim all connection with the Engliſh Biſhops, and regard them as heretics and ſchiſmatics. Whatever virtue iſſued from the See of *Rome* to the Engliſh Biſhops, while Popiſh, ceaſed when they became Proteſtants. But ſuppoſing any thing of great value to have made its way through this channel to our prelates, it can have no effect, as ordination, by whom, or whatever be the manner in which it is adminiſtered, is nothing without the

the conſent of the people. Therefore, though the Biſhop were one in this ſucceſſion, not having been called to the exerciſe of his miniſtry by the free ſuffrages of the faithful, he is not a regular Chriſtian miniſter, agreeably to the moſt ancient accounts of ſuch an officer, and the uniform uſage of the primitive church. Before the exhortations of *Clement* and *Ignatius* can be allowed to have any force in the preſent caſe, they muſt be proved to have been delivered in favour of a miniſtry that were not of the people's choice.

Time, I believe, has been, when biſhops were leſs wont to inculcate on their clergy the preaching up theſe abſurd doctrines and high-church tenets. If our pulpits are generally made to ring with diſcourſes on theſe topics, the complexion of the country will no doubt be changed. There is, however, one conſolation, that though liberty, as it would appear from many ſymptoms, be upon the wane in this country, ſhe is riſing in all her glory in other countries, and cheering with her brightneſs and her ſplendour millions of our fellow-creatures.

Had the Biſhop, inſtead of inſiſting upon ſcholaſtic tenets, recommended it to the Parochial Clergy to make diligent reſearches into the mean-

ing of the Scriptures, in order to lay it before their hearers;—had he, inſtead of inſtructing them to depreciate morality, in order to enforce attendance upon religious ordinances, expreſſed his wiſh that they would ſhew that ſuch an attendance was itſelf a part of morality;—had he, inſtead of dwelling upon the *myſterious commerce* of the believer's ſoul with the divine ſpirit, given advice that the pleaſures and advantages of piety and virtue ſhould be ſet forth;—had he, inſtead of filling the heads of his reverend brethren with the diſtinctions that belong to them as miniſters, ſtrove to warm his own heart and theirs with a love for thoſe diſtinctions which genuine worth of character, and the aſſiduous diſcharge of the duties of the clerical function, are ſure of conferring;—he would have acted as became a Chriſtian miniſter and a good member of ſociety; he would have made religion appear reſpectable and lovely. As it is, he ſeems to have loſt ſight of both, and to have conducted himſelf as though it had been his deſign to burleſque religion, and to put an end to ſocial harmony.*

I make

* The ſame principles, I am well informed, run through the charges delivered of late in other dioceſes. Other Prelates have expreſſed themſelves in as high a tone, and as inſulting a language, with reſpect to Diſſenters, as thoſe of the head of the Parent See of Wales. The charge of a neighbouring Prelate muſt be here excepted, in which may be recognized evident traces of that manly and

I make no apology for the freedom with which I have treated thoſe of his Lordſhip's poſitions, which I deemed erroneous. The perſon who not only defends abſurdities, but ſeems to glory in rendering abſurdities ſtill more abſurd, and who adds inſolence to bigotry, be he biſhop or whatever he be, I think entitled to no quarter. Though I may appear to conſider theological abſurdities in no very ſerious light, I ſhould be ſorry, if any one ſhould hence infer, that I was wanting in due veneration for religious truths.

and liberal ſpirit, which, on ſeveral occaſions, has given pleaſure to the friends of civil and religious freedom. The extreme caution, ſo manifeſt in this publication, ſhews the bad ſpirit of the times, no leſs than the unreſtrained virulence and acrimony of the high-church Prelates. Such is the ſituation of the *poor Diſſenters*, that an unpopular Biſhop finds his account in declaring that *he is acquainted with few, and intimate with none of them*. I cannot help, however, here obſerving, that if ſuch men as Biſhop Watſon would come forth with greater firmneſs; would ſpeak out, rather than darkly intimate; fully ſtate, rather than obliquely hint; the ſituation of things would be more ſpeedily improved. By acting as they do, they appear to me to be the means of prolonging rather than of ſhortening our bondage.

INTRODUCTION.

THERE is nothing, however excellent, which the ignorance of thoſe who have to do with it, may not render leſs beneficial, and even injurious. It is poſſible in this way to convert helps into detriments, advantages into diſadvantages, and bleſſings into curſes. Every one is ſenſible that this has been the caſe with reſpect to riches and learning, and eminently ſo with reſpect to religion. While we obſerve true religion to elevate the mind, to make men happy in themſelves, and benevolent to others, ſomething bearing its ſacred name has been ſeen to debaſe it to the loweſt pitch, making individuals very miſerable, and inſpiring them with unamiable and pernicious ſentiments. Religion being capable of giving riſe, as it is rightly or erroneouſly conceived of, to ſuch a diverſity of effects, offers the ſtrongeſt claims to our attention. Every principle of reverence for the GOD whom it concerns, and of regard for ourſelves, whoſe welfare it ſo intimately affects, condemns our treating it ſlightly.

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In order to form juſt conceptions of Religion, it muſt be made the ſubject of thought and examination; it muſt be ſubmitted to diligent and careful inquiry, that our judgments concerning it may be clear and decided.

It is in the violation of this rule, namely, that of *every one examining and judging for himſelf in matters of Religion*, that we are to look for the cauſes of the prevalence of thoſe errors in doctrine, and thoſe ſuperſtitious uſages, which at one time were univerſal among Chriſtians. It was the ſurrender of the rights of free enquiry and private judgment that made way for the entrance of all thoſe abſurdities in faith and practice, which were every where predominant when Luther began his oppoſition to the ſee of Rome.

Chriſt and his Apoſtles laid claims to inſpiration, and they eſtabliſhed theſe claims by the miracles which they wrought. On this ground they demanded aſſent to be given to the doctrines which they taught, and it was very properly granted. Certain of their followers learnt to make ſimilar pretenſions, but without the ſame ſolid foundations for them. Theſe pretenſions the greater number at length was brought to admit; and as theſe were propoſed not all at once, but gradually and with conſiderable management, they roſe at length to an exorbitancy,

exorbitancy, and led to conſequences, of which no one can form any conception, who has not ſome acquaintance with eccleſiaſtical hiſtory.

Let us not cenſure immoderately this remiſſneſs of our Chriſtian brethren of ancient times, till we have fair reaſons to conclude, that we ourſelves do not labour under like indolence and ſupineneſs. Their miſplaced confidence formed an inlet for all that torrent of error and ſuperſtition which overwhelmed the plain truths and ſimple rites of the Chriſtian Religion. It is not for us to find fault, if, in conſequence of a deference as little deſerved, we arreſt the progreſs of knowledge, and hinder its making any farther advances.

Between us and the more early Chriſtians there is at leaſt this difference; though we may be as tame and ſervile in our ſubmiſſion to certain human authorities as they were, we do not like them ſubmit to have any new falſe doctrines impoſed upon us, or faith to be demanded to any newly fabricated creeds.

The Doctors, who have been the oracles of modern eſtabliſhed churches, have not had credit enough to add to the articles of our creeds; their invention has been ſet to work, and all their ingenuity and addreſs have been employed ſolely in conſtructing ſupports for thoſe which the Reformers choſe

choſe to adopt, and to impoſe on their followers to the end of time.

It is one of the methods practiſed by theſe men, to be for ever trumpeting the praiſes of the Reformers: their merits they know not how enough to extol, and can never find words too harſh, by which to characteriſe thoſe who dare think for themſelves, and who charge the Reformers with incompetence, no leſs than impertinence, in their attempts to determine for others what it is right to believe, and what ought to be rejected.

With what little reaſon ſuch powers are ſuppoſed to have been lodged in the hands of the chiefs of of the reformation will readily appear, if we read the hiſtory of that important event. That the perſons who took the lead in it conceived more juſtly of the principles and ſpirit of the Chriſtian doctrine, than the generality of thoſe who continued in the Romiſh communion, is not to be queſtioned. Many of them were urged by upright, though indeed imperfect views, while others were actuated by deſigns leſs laudable. Among the former may be reckoned the juſtly-honoured names of Zuinglius, of Luther, of Melancthon, of Calvin, of Lælius Socinus, and of Fauſtus of the ſame noble family, who was high in favour at the Court of Tuſcany, but which his love of true religion, and his deſire to attain

to

to the true knowledge of the Scriptures, made him relinquiſh.

Though the efforts of theſe men were highly meritorious; though the advances they made were very conſiderable; it would ſtill be unreaſonable to expect that under their hands religious truth ſhould have been completely diſcloſed; that the corruptions of ages ſhould have been wiped away in a few years. That men, who had themſelves been educated in the boſom of the Church of Rome, ſhould diſcern at once all its errors, and that in the infancy of letters, while deſtitute of numberleſs ſources of information connected with the buſineſs in which they were engaged, it is highly unreaſonable to ſuppoſe, and a great deal more than what a man of any compaſs of reflection, and who allows himſelf to think freely, would ever regard as poſſible.

The perſons above-mentioned were, with a few exceptions, ſo far ſtrangers to the ſpirit of the Goſpel, as to juſtify and practiſe perſecution; and ſome of them actually had perſons put to death for differing with them in religion; for no other crime than that of rejecting their deciſions, though they themſelves had dared to trample on authorities much more venerable, and better ſupported.

If theſe men were capable of miſtaking ſo groſsly the ſpirit of the Goſpel, which ſo expreſsly enjoins forbearance and charity, and which ſo pointedly condemns uncandid judgment of others, how likely a thing is it, that they ſhould miſconceive of the doctrines of the Goſpel, which from their very nature are unravelled with more difficulty? If in defiance of the explicit commands of our Saviour, "Judge not, leſt ye be judged;" "let the tares grow "together with the wheat till the harveſt;" they did not heſitate to excommunicate their fellow-creatures, to bury them in dungeons, and to hurry them to the ſtake; by what charm was it that we ſuppoſe them to have been preſerved from error in matters of doctrine? If, in ſpite of the texts which declare the Scriptures to be the ſole rule of faith and practice, and alſo of their own profeſſions to this purpoſe, they could ſtill ſet up creeds of their own formation, filled with ſubjects of doubtful diſputation, clothed in unſcriptural terms, mixed with ill-ſounding phraſes from the ſchools of heathen philoſophy; and alſo proceed to anathematiſe thoſe who would not ſubſcribe them; brand them with the names of heretics; expoſe them to popular hatred, and harraſs them in every way they could deviſe; on what principles, I would aſk, can perſons who fell into ſuch inconſiſtencies be regarded as infallible judges of what is true and ſound doctrine?

An

An intimate acquaintance with the characters of the Reformers would make you abate much of that reverence in which they are uſually held. You would undoubtedly rejoice in the good of which they were the inſtruments in the hands of Providence; but of the inſtruments themſelves you would not think ſo highly. I mean not to ſay, that they were not good men; they certainly were ſuch; but their goodneſs was blended with much imperfection. It will occur to you that the darkneſs of the times excuſes them in a great degree; this point I am not inclined to diſpute. I would only obſerve, that if the darkneſs of the times led to errors in one way, it is probable that it ſhould in another. If on the ſcore of conduct you allow that they need your candour; on what ground is it, that you exalt them to the chair of infallibility, in determining articles of faith and forms of worſhip? I conjure you to give ſcope to the exerciſe of your own good ſenſe, and no longer to be hoodwinked by prejudices, hoary indeed with years, but ignominious in this age, when every thing is ſubjected to the *teſt of enquiry*.

Permit me to illuſtrate what I have now been ſtating, by a reference to a ſimilar occurrence in the hiſtory of philoſophy. The whole of the paragraph may be paſſed over without much inconvenience by the leſs informed reader. Till Renes

Des

Des Cartes appeared, a moſt abſurd philoſophy was every where taught in the ſchools, and received almoſt univerſally. This intrepid genius had the boldneſs to attack it, and his efforts were attended with ſingular ſucceſs, and contributed very much to bring it to diſcredit. In this, his conduct forms a parallel to that of the Reformers. Had they, and our philoſopher, ſtopped here; that is, had they been content to expoſe the errors of corrupt ſyſtems, they would have eſcaped all juſt cenſure; but with this they were not ſatisfied. The Reformers inſtituted, in place of the Romiſh, a ſyſtem fenced and guarded with equal rigidneſs againſt farther improvements, as did Des Cartes a new ſyſtem of philoſophy, laying claims to the ſame abſolute perfection with that of Ariſtotle, on the ruins of which it was erected.

As the low ſtate of ſeveral branches of knowledge, connected with theology, rendered it impoſſible for the Reformers to carry on their undertaking in any other than a very lame and imperfect manner; under ſimilar diſadvantages did Des Cartes labour with reſpect to his daring attempt of unravelling the ſyſtem of the world. It is not to be ſuppoſed that the Reformers, or that Des Cartes, though they were reſpectively unſucceſsful as to the objects they propoſed, threw away all their labours. On the contrary, great benefits have ariſen from them;

them; and it has been the fault of thoſe who have come after them, that ſtill greater have not been derived. Men of diſcernment would diſcover, that the principles on which they acted, and not their preciſe conduct, was alone worthy of imitation: that we are not to receive as true all that they believed to be ſo, but like them to ſearch, examine, and find out for ourſelves what is true. They exhibit to us examples of perſons following their private judgment, without regard to the higheſt authority, literary or theological, of thoſe who expoſed errors in conſequence of being able to diſcover them, and who ſtrove to eſtabliſh truth by evidence deduced from the proper and legitimate ſources.

Viewed in this point of light, they will appear to greater advantage, and the ſurvey will be rendered more beneficial to us.

Des Cartes is held in high reſpect as the demoliſher of a falſe philoſophy, that had been generally received for a number of centuries; and as having made conſiderable advances towards a true knowledge of things. Theſe important ſervices cover the diſgrace of his numerous errors: the fabricator of a philoſophical romance is not conſidered by men of ſcience, while they cheerfully do juſtice to the merits of the ſucceſsful adverſary of Ariſtotelian abſurdity, and the diſcoverer of many valuable phyſical

ſical truths. The dimneſs of the Carteſian twilight appears more cheering, when conſidered as the dawn of the bright day which the genius and induſtry of Newton threw over natural appearances. The glimmering of the morning ſtar is beheld with peculiar complacency, when regarded as the harbinger of the ſun that is ſhortly to ariſe to ſhed its light into the moſt ſecret receſſes of nature.

The immortal Newton appears to have obſerved with attention the ſteps which the learned foreigner had taken, to have availed himſelf of the truths he had ſtruck out, and carefully to have ſhunned the fallacious maxims by which he was guided. By making uſe of facts that had already been diſcovered, by the force of his penetrating genius, and the intenſeneſs of his application, he added to the ſtores of human knowledge the true explanation of the planetary ſyſtem. The ſame line which was purſued in philoſophy by this great man with reſpect to Des Cartes and others, has been followed by many eminent divines and critics, in the regard which they have had to the Reformers. They have made a point of treading over the ſame ground on which they proceeded; they have made it their buſineſs to examine every tittle of their ſchemes, to ſubmit them to ſtrict inveſtigation; and whatever they have found not ſanctioned by the Scriptures, or maintained by ſound reaſoning founded upon incontrovertible

controvertible principles, they have rejected. All that could ſtand theſe teſts they have cheerfully and joyfully admitted. It has been their object not to defend whatever theſe men have advanced, but to lay open the genuine truths of religion, to reſtore the Chriſtian doctrine to its native purity, that in which it came from the hands of Chriſt and his Apoſtles. But I ſhall be aſked, If the Reformers have been as much in an error in ſettling the articles of the Chriſtian faith, as Des Cartes was in his ſyſtem of philoſophy, and if in conſequence of the labours of ſeveral learned perſons, the ſame ſervices have been rendered to pure Chriſtianity, as reſulted to philoſophy from thoſe of Newton and his followers, how comes it that theſe ſyſtems have not diſplaced thoſe of the Reformers, on the ſame principles with thoſe by which the Newtonian hypotheſis diſcomfited that of Des Cartes? The anſwer to this queſtion is ſufficiently obvious. The philoſophy of Newton, when it had gained its triumph over the obſtacles thrown in its way by the learned, had not to combat with popular prejudices. Beſides, the ruling powers did not apprehend any conſequences from its ſpread; they felt no intereſt to obſtruct its progreſs. Had theſe cauſes intervened, the profeſſors at Oxford and Cambridge would at this day have taught the ſyſtem of Ariſtotle or that of Des Cartes, as I am told is done to this very

very hour by their brethren at Salamanca and Vienna, and in other places. And the philoſophy of our great countryman would have been confined to diſſenters and a few free-thinking clergy. This difference of circumſtances fully explains the reaſons, why abſurd religious creeds and confeſſions hold their ground longer againſt the batteries of truth, than wrong notions in philoſophy are able to encounter the ſame oppoſition.

To communicate information, with a view to remove prejudices againſt the additional light which at ſucceſſive periods ſince the reformation have been thrown upon ſubjects of religion, was the motive for addreſſing a letter to the Biſhop of St. David's, for the vindication of that letter in anſwer to a Clergyman of the ſame dioceſe, and alſo for the preſent undertaking. I entertain hopes that others who have more ability will be induced, by the example here exhibited, to make the places with which they are more immediately connected the objects of attention, with a view of diffuſing religious knowledge.

When I requeſt for myſelf the candour of every reader of this tract, I am abundantly more ſolicitous, that he ſhould endeavour to diveſt his mind of prejudice, that he ſhould enter on the enquiry before

before us with a breaſt unbiaſſed, reſolved to embrace and profeſs truth whereſoever and among whomſoever found. God has given him faculties to diſcover truth, and many conſiderable helps in this age, which were not ſo generally within reach in former times. This change in our circumſtances will make it ſinful in us to comply with what our forefathers, for want of better means of inſtruction, innocently ſubmitted to.

Why ſhould not we, as well as thoſe who have gone before us, examine and judge for ourſelves? We were not conſulted in determining the faith and mode of worſhip in which we have been educated; we had no voice in their eſtabliſhment; let us be mindful then, that they neither are nor ever were binding upon us. To make them ſo, the deciſions of our impartial judgments muſt be given in their favour. It is a weakneſs that we ſhould be aſhamed of, to ſurrender our underſtandings in deference to thoſe of our anceſtors, when we have an equal right to judge for ourſelves, and may exerciſe it with greater advantages than fell to their ſhare. A benignant Providence introduced Chriſtianity early into this iſland; but our forefathers, by means already pointed out, that is, by neglecting to think for themſelves, and by truſting implicitly to their teachers, became very erroneous in their

opinions, and were what we now call papiſts; in conſequence of enquiry, certain of them abandoned this profeſſion, and turned proteſtants.

What theſe perſons, ever to be honoured, were ſolicited to do, and complied with, is now requeſted of you. You are called upon to review your religious notions in the light of the Scriptures and of reaſon. This exerciſe regard as highly pleaſing and profitable, acceptable to the Fountain of Intelligence, who muſt be delighted with every advance his creatures make in intellectual excellence; the All-comprehending Mind muſt take delight in beholding his rational offspring extending the limits of their faculties, and approaching to him in wiſdom and in knowledge. If your preſent notions are well-founded, you will, in conſequence of the inveſtigation which you are now invited to make, hold from conviction what you have hitherto received upon truſt. If they are erroneous, remember that error enchains and debaſes the underſtanding, that freedom from its ſhackles will be attended with the moſt placid and pleaſurable feelings, will render the mind more conſcious of the energy of its powers, of its value, and of its dignity.

In determining the queſtion, whether your preſent creeds, the articles of your faith, and the principles that

that run through the religious ſervices in which you join, be agreeable to the Chriſtian doctrine or otherwiſe, I muſt make it a condition, that Scripture be admitted as fully competent to ſettle the point at iſſue: that the opinions of no man or body of men, be allowed to have any weight whatever; that though we may and ought to get every help we can from theſe, to learn the real ſtate of the queſtion, yet the deciſion muſt be our own act, framed and given by our unbiaſſed judgment, after the faireſt and fulleſt examination which we are capable of making.

Here a query ariſes, What is Scripture? Before printing came into uſe, there were only written copies of the Scriptures, as of all other books. In conſequence of having been frequently tranſcribed, errors would creep in, however carefully guarded againſt. It would happen that letters, words, and perhaps whole ſentences, would be left out or miſplaced; and conſiderable variations muſt be expected to obtain between the different copies. *By comparing, however the copies ſeverally with one another*, and *by conſidering the connection*, the right reading may in moſt caſes be aſcertained, by perſons whoſe minds have been freed from the influence of prejudice.

Theſe two canons are thoſe which ought to have been followed in eſtabliſhing the ſacred text. If our editors acted in any inſtances in violation of theſe, we are not bound to admit as genuine thoſe parts of our bibles which owe their places to that violation.

The perſons who firſt prepared for the preſs our New Teſtament, in the language in which it was written, were concerned to give as genuine an edition as poſſible; but their endeavours do not neceſſarily prove them to have been ſucceſsful. Other learned men, who came after, might convict them of miſtakes, and diſcover the true reading. As to theſe readings, you cannot, if you enquire, be impoſed upon; for as the learned have taken different ſides in all queſtions of any moment, you can weigh their arguments, and judge for yourſelves, with as much certainty as the moſt profound ſcholars. Beſides, you can feel, as well as the moſt learned, the force of the arguments from conſidering the connection. If you are told that a certain verſe that is omitted in all the Greek copies, excepting two, which are confeſſedly of modern date, never was quoted for ſeven centuries, though moſt applicable to a ſubject that was more than any other the topic of controverſy in thoſe times, while a verſe in the ſame paragraph, much leſs to the purpoſe, was frequently brought forwards: if, farther, you clearly perceive

perceive that this verſe has no relation to the ſcope of the paſſage, and deſtroys the connection: if ſuch a verſe, whether it was through the careleſſneſs, ignorance, or timidity of the editors, has crept into our bibles, ſhould you at all heſitate about denying its authenticity, and expunging it from the ſacred volume? Would any cavils, any ſophiſms of bigotted or of intereſted men be able to induce you to allow it a reſidence there; more eſpecially when you have the aid of the learned advocates of truth to refute and expoſe them?

The Scriptures are read by you in a language different from that in which they were written. It is not pretended, that the perſons who tranſlated them were infallible, of courſe they may in ſome caſes not have given us the true ſenſe; therefore when any learned perſon maintains this to be the caſe, you are to liſten to his reaſons, to weigh their force, and to determine accordingly.

Again, the text being correct, and the rendering being juſt, is not all that is to be conſidered; we muſt ſee whether the paſſage is to be taken in a literal or figurative ſenſe. It is very neceſſary to attend to this, as the genius and ſtile of the languages of the Eaſt differ ſo materially from thoſe of our own. Were we to interpret the Scriptures,

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on the ſame principles with thoſe we ſhould follow, had they been written in Welſh or Engliſh, we muſt, with the Quakers, never take up arms; never go to law, however juſt our cauſe; never defend ourſelves, however outrageous the attack may be that is made upon us, or however important our lives may be to our families and to the public: and with the Roman Catholics, we muſt believe tranſubſtantiation. Chriſt took the bread, and brake it, and ſaid, This is my body. And is the bread converted into the real body of Chriſt? The Papiſt replies, Yes; for our Saviour expreſsly tells us ſo. But the Proteſtant ſays not. But how does he maintain that againſt the explicit declaration of our Saviour? Becauſe, he ſays, the doctrine is abſurd and unreaſonable, and ſupported in no other places in Scripture; and there is nothing forced, he obſerves, in ſuppoſing the words to be figurative, ſeeing that figures abound in the New Teſtament. What! then the Proteſtant, in order to keep clear of a fundamental doctrine of the Church of Rome, is obliged to enter into the queſtion of its reaſonableneſs and its conſiſtency with the tenor of Scripture, and to give to certain paſſages a meaning totally oppoſite to what the words underſtood literally expreſs. This is manly. It is to act like a being who is ſenſible that he poſſeſſes reaſon, and that ſome reſpect is owing to it. It is to judge after

after viewing a thing, not partially, but on every ſide. In this conduct the Proteſtant, compared with the zealot of the Romiſh communion, appears a ſuperior being. Would to God Proteſtants would be conſiſtent throughout; that they would follow this rule in all inſtances, and ſubmit the doctrines which they profeſs to believe to be tried by it!

The doctrines to which you give your aſſent were eſtabliſhed upwards of two centuries ago, in circumſtances very diſadvantageous, and by hands very incompetent to the undertaking. I propoſe, in the preſent work, to lay before you ſome conſiderations to aſſiſt you to determine whether they are the real Chriſtian doctrines, or the inventions of men. On this queſtion the Scriptures muſt be allowed to decide; that is, the Scriptures, as they are fairly drawn out from the written copies, as they are accurately tranſlated, and as interpreted in conformity to the genius of the languages in which they were written. He who agrees not to theſe conditions may ſpare himſelf the trouble of going on any farther in this work, as it can be of no benefit to him: nothing that is ſaid in it can have any effect upon him. It is not deſigned to gratify mere curioſity, but to guide the ſteady ſerious enquirer in his ſearch after truth. It is alſo neceſſary, courteous reader, that your mind be in a ſtate of perfect indifference as to which ſide truth lies.

Are

Are you only anxious to learn where ſhe is to be met with? And are you reſolved to join yourſelf to her, wherever ſhe is diſcovered? If this be not the caſe, be pleaſed to lay this pamphlet down 'till you have brought your mind to this ſtate, and then we ſhall proceed together with unſpeakable pleaſure and advantage through the toils of this arduous and momentous enquiry.

PART I.

The State of the Heathen World at the Time of Chriſt's Appearance.

It will help us in our enquiry into the primitive Chriſtian doctrine, to conſider the ſtate of the Heathen world at the time of Chriſt's appearance. A ſurvey of the evils which thoſe doctrines were intended to remove, will afford more aſſiſtance than we are perhaps aware of, to determine what thoſe doctrines were.

CHAP. I.

THE HEATHENS WORSHIPPED MANY GODS.

AT the time of which we are ſpeaking, the worſhip of many gods prevailed over the whole world. In the moſt poliſhed as well as the ruder nations, very idols, the works of the ſtatuary, human ſpirits, and natural bodies, more eſpecially the celeſtial, formed the objects of worſhip. The evil of this practice was far from conſiſting wholly in depriving the one true GOD of the worſhip due to him, and transferring it to improper objects; tho' even this, in all

all who might have known better, was highly wrong. The greateſt miſchiefs of polytheiſm aroſe from hence, that theſe degraded deities were regarded by their votaries as under the influence of the worſt paſſions, even the chiefs among them were repreſented as abandoned to the laſt degree, more acted upon by malice, revenge, and luſt, than hardly any men ever have been. The worſhippers would, we may be aſſured, think it no crime, but on the contrary a merit, to reſemble thoſe to whom they paid adoration. Take into the account alſo the rites and ceremonies of which the worſhip of theſe gods conſiſted. Some of them were moſt indecent, attended with drunkenneſs, and every ſpecies of profligacy. Others were ſtained by rites of ſhocking inhumanity, by the moſt wild fanaticiſm, and the moſt ſilly puerilities. This being the ſtate of the world, how important in itſelf, and how welcome to perſons rightly diſpoſed, muſt have been the intelligence, that there is but one God, who fills all ſpace, who is preſent every where, who is almighty, all-wiſe, and all-good, whoſe benevolence is unlimited, and who extends his care to all his creatures! How agreeable to the converted heathen muſt it have been to exchange the profane and obſcene rites of ſuch a rabble of divinities for the pure worſhip of the true God! To quit a worſhip which degraded human nature, to join in that which exalts the mind by the proper exerciſe of its faculties! What a wretched

wretched ſight! What an humbling exhibition of miſerable man, was a heathen with his breaſt filled with the moſt diſtreſſing apprehenſions, proſtrate before ſome unrelenting deity, endeavouring to appeaſe its wrath, and to deprecate its vengeance! How different the ſituation of a Chriſtian! how dignified does he appear in the rational ſervice which he renders to infinite wiſdom and intelligence! The acts of contemplating the great mind that governs the univerſe, need not, to have their happy tendency duly valued, be ſet in contraſt with the polluted ſervices of the gentile religion; acts which when duly performed, ſwell the boſom with the grandeſt and moſt ſublime thoughts; which enlarge the underſtanding, and improve the morals.

From this view of things it would appear, that the Unity of God, his Perfections and Providence, and the ſpiritual worſhip he requires, form the moſt important articles of the Chriſtian doctrine, thoſe which the converts from Gentiliſm would moſt highly prize.

Without placing ourſelves as it were in their circumſtances; without entering deeply into their views, and ſurveying cloſely the religious and civil uſages by which they were bound, I mean previouſly to their converſion; we cannot form any adequate ideas of the high ineffable eſtimation, in which

which they would hold the articles above ſtated, nor of that in which they ought to be held by ourſelves.

Let thoſe who traduce the advocates of rational ſentiments in religion, with depreciating its value, give due conſideration to this account of the ſtate of things at the time of Chriſt's appearance. When they charge us with reducing Chriſtianity to the level of natural religion; let them, while they do this, if they expect any attention to be paid them, inform us, what ſingle individual, much leſs what ſect of philoſophers, ſtill much leſs, what nation, learnt the Unity of God, the perfections of his nature, and the worſhip due to him, from natural religion. Till this can be ſhewn, the kind of declamation now referred to will be made to no purpoſe.

Here it is highly worthy of notice, that to aſcertain the value of any of the Chriſtian doctrines, we muſt endeavour to learn the eſtimate in which they would be held; not by the multitude of this day, who are diſpoſed to admire more what is fantaſtic and monſtrous, than what is regular and well proportioned; who are more ſtruck with the giants at Guildhall, than with the faireſt models of ancient ſtatuary; not by perſons of the preſent day, who have been always converſant with the moſt important revealed truths, whoſe ideas have been perverted

verted by the corruptions of religion, in a veneration for which they have been educated, and on which they have been taught to lay the greateſt ſtreſs; but we ſhould rather be guided by that in which they would be held by ſober, conſiderate and reflecting heathens, who had experienced all the ill-effects of polytheiſm. Had we been educated heathens, would any authentic information be more acceptable to us, than that by which we learnt, that there is one God who made the univerſe, that he is powerful and wiſe, and merciful, that he cares for all his creatures with the tenderneſs of a parent, that he is pleaſed and delighted with the honeſt homage of our hearts? With what joy and gratitude would a revelation of this ſimple creed fill our boſoms! We ſhould cheerfully allow, that we had all the knowledge of God which could be turned to any practical uſe. How much would ſuch a creed be preferred by us, to that which is called the Athanaſian? Did any pompous prieſt chaunt to us the dogmas of this formulary as the dictates of evangelical truth, we ſhould, I apprehend, turn from him with diſguſt, to liſten to that which Peter recited to Cornelius, or that which Paul inculcated on the Athenians; at the ſame time telling him, that what he taught us was the ſame dull unmeaning jargon with that which was dealt out in the ſchool of Alexandria by the myſtic followers of

Plato,

Plato, and of ancient philoſophy; that with ſuch diſquiſitions we had no inclination to be perplexed and bewildered, as we ſaw no benefits likely to ariſe, were we to undergo the penance.

CHAP. II.

THE HEATHENS LABOURED UNDER DEPLORABLE IGNORANCE WITH REGARD TO A RIGHT RULE OF CONDUCT.

WE have already ſeen the tendency of their theology to corrupt their morals. They were ignorant of the lawful limits of paſſion and appetite; they had no authoritative rule within which to reſtrain the impetuous impulſes of their nature. A law, written as it were by GOD himſelf, proclaimed by faithful meſſengers, which extended to the ſecret movements of the heart, as well as to outward acts, muſt have been an acquiſition of the higheſt value in the eyes of the well-diſpoſed heathens. It muſt have been to ſuch a moſt grateful thing to have the path of duty clearly marked out, ſo as not to be miſſed by the moſt ſimple, if really he deſired to keep therein. However *we* may think of Chriſtianity, I am ſtrongly led to think, that *they* would not conſider its code of morality as one of its

its leaſt excellencies. It would not be deemed a light thing by them to receive clear inſtructions, how to ſerve God; how to act towards our fellow-creatures in the various relations we bear to them; and how we are to think of ourſelves. They would regard as rich treaſures thoſe higher motives which can alone be drawn from the doctrines of the Goſpel, to cultivate ſuch ſocial good qualities as, univerſal good-will, meekneſs, forbearance and charity. The knowledge of a right rule of conduct, the obligation to its obſervance, the efficacy of that obſervance to draw down upon us the divine favour, and other bleſſings, would be deemed, by thoſe who had been involved in the darkneſs of heatheniſm, as leading and principal articles of the Chriſtian religion, as moſt valuable communications.

To thoſe who calumniate rational religion, and repreſent it as no better than natural religion, I again reply by aſking, Shew us the man, ſhew us the ſect of philoſophers, ſhew us the community, that learnt a tolerable ſyſtem of morality from the light of nature, and I will acknowledge the juſtneſs of your concluſions. That the obligations of virtue may be demonſtrated from data that are totally independent of revelation, I am ready to grant; but as this had not been done; and as they lay as far beyond their knowledge, as the phyſical truths that have been brought to light in modern times, the

the value of the Goſpel, as containing a perfect rule of conduct, is not at all diminiſhed, and particularly as it lays open more powerful ſanctions to enforce the obſervance of this rule.

CHAP. III.

THE HEATHENS HAD NO KNOWLEDGE ON CERTAIN GROUNDS OF A FUTURE STATE.

IT is a fact that muſt enhance the value of Chriſtianity in the eſteem of thinking perſons, that the doctrine of a future ſtate loſt ground among the heathens in conſequence of being diſcuſſed. We do not find at any period great ſtreſs to have been laid upon it by their wiſeſt men; they had no religious rite or ſervice founded upon it; they never urge it as a motive to virtuous conduct. It ſeems to have been little elſe than a topic on which diſputants diſplayed their logical ſkill, and which they made uſe of to exerciſe their ingenuity and ſubtilty. About the time of our Saviour's appearance, faith in this doctrine ſeems to have been at the loweſt ebb. It was abſolutely diſcarded by the Epicureans and Stoics; and it was placed by the Platoniſts on the ſame ground with the pre-exiſtence of ſouls. Indeed, it was on this fact that they ſeem principally

pally to build their hopes of immortality: and we are told by Cicero, that a ſtate of retribution was regarded by the vulgar as an idle notion.

To people in this ſtate, can we imagine any tidings more cheering, than thoſe by which they were aſſured that the Being who at firſt made them would raiſe them to life, and to a ſtate of endleſs happineſs; that a heaven, the enjoyments of which far exceeded the dreams of elyſium, awaited the good man?

To regard the doctrine of a future ſtate as a tenet that may be learnt from the light of nature, muſt argue the groſſeſt ignorance in reference to theſe matters. It forms no article in the creed of the moſt able and conſiſtent unbelievers of the preſent day.

I infer then, that the doctrine of the Divine Unity, in oppoſition to gentile polytheiſm; of a ſtrict rule of conduct, in oppoſition to the looſe morals that prevailed throughout the heathen world; and of the efficacy of its obſervance to procure the divine favour; and of a well-grounded faith in a future life, in oppoſition to the vague conjectures, and faint hopes which were afloat among the heathens, conſtitute the chief doctrines of Chriſtianity; that to eſtabliſh the latter on a ſure

and immoveable baſis was its chief glory, and what renders it principally valuable.

When I conſider the ſtate of the Gentiles, I cannot conceive of any thing more unworthy of divine wiſdom, than would have been the ſending perſons to preach up, inſtead of the Divine Unity, the Divine Miſſion of Jeſus, and the Reſurrection from the dead, ſuch dogmas as the following, *a Trinity in Unity*; *Three Divine Perſons in one undivided Eſſence*; the *incarnation* of the ſecond perſon in the Trinity; the *hypoſtatical union* of two natures in the perſon of Chriſt; and the *natural immortality* of the ſoul, founded on its being *immaterial* and *indiſcerptible*. Had the Apoſtles ſaluted their ears with theſe barbarous ſounds, they would have thought that ſome of the philoſophers of the Lyceum, or of the Academy, had quitted their ſchools, and were coming to diſtract them with their abſtruſe propoſitions. What ſatisfaction would a knowledge of theſe terms have given them on which ſo much ſtreſs is now laid? Nothing can be imagined more unintereſting and uninviting than theſe diſtinctions and terms, (notions they cannot be called) which are now ſo intemperately contended for, had they been inculcated on the heathens. What error would they have corrected? What wrong notion would they have overthrown? What conſolatory reflection would they have adminiſtered? An intelligent

Gentile

Gentile would have ſaid, 'we meet with theſe high-'ſounding words, theſe ſubtilties, in ſufficient abun-'dance in our own writers; we cannot ſee that 'yours equal them; yours are ſet off with leſs art 'and ſkill, with leſs appearance of conſiſtency and 'method. We have been long enough perplexed 'with the ſort of diſquiſitions which you introduce; 'and we cannot eaſily be brought to believe that 'God would give you heavenly commiſſions to add 'to our perplexity.' Theſe, I conceive, would be the natural ſentiments of a heathen read in the works of Plato and Ariſtotle, and their followers, on hearing Chriſtianity detailed, as it is in the Athanaſian and Nicene creeds, and in the cate-chiſms, confeſſions, and articles of faith, which in all modern eſtabliſhed churches have ſupplanted the authority of the Bible.

The reaſon why the diſtinctions and ſubtilties with which theſe are filled are ſo much admired and adhered to in the preſent day, is founded in ſuperſtition. The modern orthodox believers, as they are called, are influenced in their attachment to the doctrines of a Trinity, of the Hypoſtatic Union, of the Incarnation, of vicarious Sacrifice, of an immaterial Soul, by the ſame principles with thoſe which lead the pious Catholic to connect the ſalvation of his ſoul with reckoning his beads, with repeating his Ave-Marias, with his croſſings, with

his going pilgrimages, &c. The believer in human ſyſtems finds it more eaſy and amuſing to be dealing out theſe words and the ſpeculations that have been made upon them, than to be employed in elevating his piety, and improving his virtue. Scanning the Trinity he finds more agreeable than following the plain command, "be perfect, "as your Father who is in heaven is perfect." To deify Chriſt, and to exalt him with his lips, he likes better than to copy his temper, and to honour him in his life. To truſt to the righteouſneſs of another, he finds more convenient than to work out one of his own. To aggrandize the native excellence of the ſoul, is leſs painful than the induſtry and diligence by which it may attain to real worth. I would not be underſtood to give a deſcription that anſwers to the characters of all thoſe who have departed from the genuine doctrines of the Goſpel, but rather the natural tendency of the deviations themſelves. In ſome, the influence of the truths they hold, together with a happy temperament of body and mind, counteracts that of the errors in which they are involved; others there are in whom their operations are exemplified in the fulleſt manner.

PART II.

Proofs from Reaſon and Scripture, that the Doctrines of the Divine Unity, of the neceſſity and efficacy of good Works, and of the Reſurrection, form the principal Articles of the Chriſtian Faith.

CHAP. I.

OF THE UNITY OF GOD.

THE viſible connection between all the parts of nature, the harmony of their operations, the ſimplicity of the principles by which theſe are produced, and the unity of deſign which every where ſtrikes us, proclaim the intelligent Firſt Cauſe of all things to be One. The attributes and perfections which the ſame conſiderations force the mind to aſcribe to this One Firſt Cauſe, exclude from the univerſe another cauſe every way like the firſt. Appearances afford no proofs that there are two or three Almighties; we have no evidence that there is more than One, who is infinitely wiſe and benevolent; and the ſuppoſition of two or three Omnipreſents coexiſting is an abſurdity. If the works of creation are allowed to convey any knowledge of Deity, if any thing relating to his perfections

perfections may be collected from them, it may be aſſerted that they intimate as ſtrongly his unity, as they do his power, wiſdom, and goodneſs; indeed the reaſons drawn from this ſource, in ſupport of his unity, are more numerous and forcible than thoſe which prove his unlimited goodneſs.

Throughout the Old Teſtament the unity of God is clearly maintained. One great reaſon of the ſeparation of Abraham and his deſcendants from the reſt of mankind was, to preſerve in the world a knowledge of this truth, of which, at that time, all the nations of the earth had almoſt wholly loſt ſight. "Thou ſhalt have no other gods be-"fore me. Hear, O Iſrael, the LORD thy God is "one LORD;" or, as it more properly might be read, "JEHOVAH thy God is one JEHOVAH." Theſe were the ſolemn declarations which were delivered to the children of Iſrael, by their great lawgiver Moſes, from JEHOVAH himſelf. This people, whom all Chriſtians agree in regarding as the worſhippers of the true GOD, had no idea of three diſtinct perſons in one undivided eſſence. You who have carefully read the Jewiſh Scriptures will, I am confident, readily own, that you found nothing in them to countenance the notion of a Trinity of perſons in the Divine Unity. I muſt, however, inform you, that ſome divines have maintained that

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it was clearly taught there. The plural termination of the Hebrew word which we tranſlate *God*, has been conſidered by ſome as an evidence of a plurality of divine perſons. This is indeed a very weak foundation, the term being not appropriate to GOD, but often ſignifying angels, judges, magiſtrates, and prophets, and denoting the power they poſſeſs. In the Hebrew tongue it is uſual to put the plural termination for the ſingular to expreſs dignity and pre-eminence. Hence the reaſon why, when applied to GOD, it is put in the plural form. It would be wrong to pretend a difficulty here, when we have ſuch decided proofs, that the Jews, who muſt underſtand beſt the peculiarities of their own language, regarded GOD as, in the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the word, one. Do not then imagine, when you read the following paſſages; "And GOD ſaid, we will make man;"—"Come, "we will go down, and we will confound;" that a plurality of perſons is intimated, when in reality it is only a mode of expreſſion declarative of the dignity of the perſon ſpeaking. We are not ſuch ſtrangers to this kind of phraſeology which prevails in the Eaſt as we ſhould have been, had it not been uſed by our kings, and alſo by perſons whoſe object it was at one time to rival kings, and even to ſet themſelves above them; I mean biſhops. They do not ſay, I will this or that, this is my pleaſure,

this

this is due to me; but *we* will this or that, this is *our* pleaſure, this is due to *us*.

I know not where more properly than in this place, to introduce an obſervation deſerving of being attentively conſidered. In the Old Teſtament the ſame things are ſaid at one time to be done by God, which at another are ſaid to be done by his angel. Some perſons have hence inferred that the angel was God, and the ſecond perſon in the Trinity. How apt are people, when a favourite tenet is to be defended, to act contrary to plain ſenſe. What God did by his angel, may be ſaid to have been done by God himſelf. We ſay the King of England proclaimed war; and we alſo ſay, that the herald proclaimed it; no one hence concludes that the herald is the ſame with the king, or that he is poſſeſſed of the ſame diſtinctions and authority.

If Chriſt be God, diſtinct from the Father, God is no longer one. Allow me then to bring forward the few paſſages, from the Old Teſtament, that have been looked upon to intimate the Godhead of the Meſſiah. Iſaiah, ſpeaking of him, ſays, (according to our tranſlation) "and his name "ſhall be called Wonderful, Counſellor, the mighty "God, the everlaſting Father, the Prince of Peace."

Everlaſting

Everlaſting Father will not, I ſuppoſe, be contended for as a proper rendering by any ſcholar: Dr. Lowth, the late biſhop of London, who was abundantly orthodox, as it is termed, has it in his tranſlation, the *Father of the Age.* Powerful conſiderations have been brought forward againſt the preſent Hebrew reading. It is evident that the authors of the Greek verſion, called the Septuagint, were ſtrangers to this reading. In a late tranſlation of Iſaiah, it is thus rendered, *and his name ſhall be called the Meſſenger of the great Deſign; the Father of the Age; the Prince of Peace.** Should any deem the reaſons inſufficient which have been alledged for this rendering, they ſhould recollect, that the word which we tranſlate GOD does in other places ſignify Prince, Magiſtrate, Judge, &c. One of our ableſt linguiſts renders the whole verſe thus: *And his name ſhall be called Wonderful, Counſellor, Powerful, Mighty, the Father of the Age, the Prince of Peace.* Again it is ſaid, "his goings forth have been "from of old, from everlaſting." Theſe expreſſions refer to his birth, as preordained in the divine councils, as the paſſage wherein he is ſaid to have been ſlain from the foundation of the world does to the preordination of his death.

The following words of Malachi, "The LORD, "whom ye ſeek, ſhall ſuddenly come to his tem-

* See a Tranſlation of Iſaiah by *a Layman*, printed for Johnſon; p. 18 and 206.

" ple," have been without any ſufficient reaſon applied to Chriſt, whereas JEHOVAH was undoubtedly the perſon whom the prophet meant.

Nothing can be more unreaſonable than to lay ſtreſs on two or three doubtful paſſages, in oppoſition to the general tenor of the ſcriptures. If theſe are allowed to have any force in oppoſition to the evident ſenſe of a multitude of expreſs texts, of numerous incidental proofs, and the whole ſcope of a work, we have no ſure rule by which to make out its meaning.

That the Jews were Unitarians, and worſhipped one God, without admitting any other to ſhare with him the rights of divinity, appears to me to be a fact as ſuſceptible of clear and decided proof, as is that of the church of England being Trinitarian. To prove the Trinity from the Old Teſtament, or to reconcile it to that doctrine, appears to me as hopeleſs a taſk as it would be to make out that the Common-Prayer and the book of Homilies are in ſupport of the divine unity. Compare the Jewiſh forms of worſhip with your own; is there not as wide a difference between them as there is between Unitarianiſm and Trinitarianiſm? Do you imagine, that if Moſes and the reſt of the prophets had been ſuch trinitarians as you are, that they would have expreſſed themſelves as they have done?

done? Would no trinitarian declarations have fallen from their lips? Suppoſe them to have been unitarians, and their conduct is conſiſtent and natural. You will reply, that though theſe things ſhould be allowed to have been ſo, it only proves that the trinity was not revealed to the Jews.

If this doctrine be of ſuch importance as to involve him in damnation who does not believe it, as your Athanaſian Creed maintains, how ſtrange is it, that ſuch a doctrine was never taught the favourite people of GOD! When he gave them ſuch full and ample information reſpecting his perfections and providence, how came it that he ſhould conceal from them ſo momentous a tenet? Why were the ſecond and third perſons in the trinity to be excluded from the rights of divinity for ſo many ages, and the firſt perſon to engroſs the whole to himſelf, while one third part of it only belonged to him? But, admitting the concealment of the trinity from the Jews to be a myſtery, one that deſerves to be added to the long catalogue of thoſe which exerciſe the faith, and humble the reaſon of the modern believer, let us proceed to examine the conduct of JESUS and his Apoſtles.

We may ſuppoſe that this prime article of religion, this diſtinguiſhing doctrine of the goſpel, as it

it is called by ſome, and without which, if we believe them, chriſtianity would have nothing to diſtinguiſh it from natural religion, we may, I ſay, naturally ſuppoſe, that this doctrine would be formally and explicitly announced by them, with a ſolemnity becoming its importance, and alſo with exhortations to men not to ſuffer their reaſon to rebel againſt it. And as it is ſomething to be believed, rather than in any degree to be comprehended, we ſhould expect it to be accurately ſtated, the very terms that were to expreſs it to come from the Holy Ghoſt, it being impoſſible for man to find ſuitable words; for when human beings clothe any doctrine in words, they are guided in the choice of them by the ideas they have of it. Therefore, ſince no mortal is capable of entertaining any idea concerning the Trinity, no mortal could be intruſted to make any variation or emendation in the language in which it was revealed. We ſhould therefore imagine that Chriſt would lay hold of the firſt opportunity, in order to announce this wonderful doctrine of a trinity. Amazing! Not a word does he ſay of it, not a ſingle intimation, not a parable that bears any alluſion to it, did he deliver in the whole courſe of his miniſtry; Chriſt, being one of the trinity, by no word or action, or any incident whatever, led even his diſciples to think that he was any other than the long-expected prince,

who

who was to redeem the glory of Iſrael, to reſcue them from the Roman yoke, and to commence a moſt glorious and brilliant reign over the houſe of Jacob. Are godhead and humanity things ſo much alike as to admit of being thus confounded? O the extent of human perverſeneſs,—the power of prejudice,—the ſway of bigotry,—that can blind men ſo far as to make them charge the oracles of God with their own abſurd conceits! Hail, glorious day, that haſt been for ſome time dawning, when reaſon, unſhackled by intereſt and ſuperſtition, ſhall exerciſe its long-diſputed and longer-neglected rights; and ſubmit, whatever is the object of belief, to the teſt of cool and impartial examination!

But, to return to the ſubject. What is ſtill more puzzling, the conduct of Jesus was ſuch as if he had meant to perpetuate the notion of the abſolute unity of God. He ſeems moſt ready, and as it were to go out of his way, to do this. For, to a man who had called him good, he ſaid, "why "calleſt thou me good? none is good, ſave one, "God." If, to hold that God is one be an error, was not this a declaration directly calculated to perpetuate it? Had Chriſt regarded himſelf as God equal to the Father, the ſecond perſon in the trinity, his reply will appear moſt extraordinary; nor do I ſee on what principles of honeſty he could have

have made an obſervation ſo much adapted to miſlead. In another place he calls himſelf, "a *man* "who had told them the truth which he had heard "of GOD."

Is it not ſomething ſingular, that the trinity was ſtill to be concealed from men? Our Saviour conducts himſelf as if he wiſhed JEHOVAH to be regarded as his God, one in perſon, as the Jews had always conſidered him, and himſelf a man. He moſt generally ſtyles himſelf the *Son of Man.* The people who ſaw him had no other idea of him, than that of a man. "Come, ſee a *man* who told "me all." "A *man*, called JESUS, made clay." "Is not this the *carpenter's ſon*; do not his father "and brethren live among us?"

It may be ſaid, if JESUS did not publiſh the trinity to the multitude, no more did he his Meſſiahſhip. Be it noticed, that he gave broad intimations of his Meſſiahſhip in parables and figures, and in other ways. He never attempted to deny it, never uſed words, nor followed practices that led that way; all which he did with reſpect to his ſuppoſed godhead.

Have we any evidence that he revealed this doctrine to his Apoſtles and his other diſciples in private, as he did other matters that were kept ſecret from

from his ordinary hearers? We are entirely in the dark about it. If any thing of this kind tranſpired, it is ſtrange that the Evangeliſts omitted to mention it. If Chriſt and his Apoſtles were trinitarians, how wonderful is it that they ſhould never have converſed on the ſubject! whereas the modern trinitarians neither pray nor preach, nor talk of religion, without ſome manifeſt reference to the doctrine of three perſons in the divine eſſence.

Paſſing over the inexplicable circumſtance of the ſilence of the Evangeliſts, with reſpect to any particular inſtructions being given by Chriſt to his Apoſtles in relation to his own divinity, that of the Holy Ghoſt, and the myſtery of the Trinity; we ſhould certainly conclude that this doctrine, which all its advocates regard as the grand foundation of our faith, would immediately have been preached by the Apoſtles and the firſt Chriſtian preachers; but unaccountable as it muſt appear to the Trinitarians, the doctrine is ſtill kept behind the ſcene, it is not expoſed to view. GOD is mentioned in the ſame terms as thoſe uſed in the Jewiſh Scriptures, and not the moſt diſtant hint is thrown out of Jeſus Chriſt being GOD Almighty. Peter in his firſt ſermon gives this account of him: "Jeſus, a "*man* approved of GOD by miracles, and wonders, "and ſigns, which GOD did by him." Again he ſays, "Through this *man* is preached unto you the "forgiveneſs of ſins."

If,

If, in oppoſition to the conſiderations laid before you in relation to the faith of the Jewiſh church, you ſhould ſay that Peter did not preach the Trinity to the Jews, it being already known to them; I would aſk, why was it not brought forward at Athens? Why was it not ſtated to thoſe heathens? Why was ſuch an account given as an Unitarian would have delivered, and Chriſt termed "a *man* "whom God hath ordained to judge the world in "righteouſneſs?" Were Doctor Horſley to go upon a miſſion to preach the goſpel to the Hindoos, would he preach a ſermon in the ſame ſtrain with this of the Apoſtle Paul? He certainly would not. If an Unitarian were to addreſs them, he would expreſs himſelf in no other terms. "He that hath "ears to hear, let him hear."

I am under the neceſſity of dwelling chiefly on leading circumſtances. Were I to canvaſs each objection and argument that have been employed on one ſide or the other on this ſubject, I muſt have addreſſed to you half a dozen volumes, inſtead of a pamphlet.

To me it appears that the abſolute Unity of the Deity, in oppoſition to a Trinity of perſons, has been fully eſtabliſhed, by its having been ſhewn, that the Jews did not hold the Trinity; that they had no knowledge of it; that Jeſus neither preached it to his

his ordinary hearers, nor taught it in private to his diſciples; that the Apoſtles neither preached it to Jews nor Gentiles, and conducted themſelves in this matter, in a manner that is only conſiſtent with their being Unitarians. The concluſion then which we ought to draw is, That the Trinity is not a doctrine of the Scriptures; that theſe have only been preſſed to ſupport it by the art and ingenuity of men; that it is a plant that has ſprung up in ſome rank ſoil of heathen philoſophy among other like weeds, and has been tranſplanted with them into holy ground.

It will be expected that I ſhould conſider thoſe texts which have been thought to ſupport the doctrine of Chriſt's divinity, that of his being GOD equal with the Father.

The following are among thoſe uſually quoted for that purpoſe:

Acts xx. 28. "Feed the church of God, which "he hath purchaſed with his blood." The beſt and moſt ancient copies read Lord inſtead of God.

1 John iii. 16. "Hereby perceive we the love "of God, becauſe he laid down his life for us." The proper reading of this paſſage is, 'Herein we perceive love, that he (Chriſt) laid down his life for us.'

Rev. xxii. 13. "I am Alpha and Omega, the "first and the laſt." 1 John v. 7. "There are three "that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Son, "and the Holy Ghoſt, and theſe three are one;" are interpolations, and ought not to be ſuffered to keep their places in our Bibles, as they are not to be found in the ancient copies and verſions. As is alſo the word God in 1 Tim. iii. 16, which ſhould be read, inſtead of "Great is the myſtery "of godlineſs, *God* manifeſt in the fleſh;" Great is the myſtery of godlineſs, which was manifeſt in the fleſh.

There is but one verſe which preſents a ſerious difficulty in oppoſition to the aſſertion that Chriſt in the New Teſtament is never called God, and that is, Rom. ix. 5. "Whoſe are the fathers, and "of whom as concerning the fleſh Chriſt came, "who is over all God bleſſed for evermore." The reading ſuggeſted by Slictingius, and afterwards adopted by Drs. Whitby and Taylor, is, 'Whoſe are 'the fathers, of whom as concerning the fleſh Chriſt 'came, and whoſe is the God over all bleſſed for 'evermore;" by which reading it is made to form a juſt and beautiful climax. But it is a reading that is ſupported by not a ſingle Greek copy. We have however the ſtrongeſt evidence that it was read differently from what it is now in the time of Origen;

Origen; for that learned father ſays, 'We are not 'of that caſt (whom he had juſt deſcribed as thoſe) 'who are ſo raſh as to ſuppoſe the Saviour to be 'God over all, but pay more regard to his own 'account of himſelf, "My Father who hath ſent "me is greater than I."

So much for texts that either have been interpolated, or elſe corrupted. Let us next conſider thoſe upon which a wrong or forced conſtruction has been put.

John i. 1, 2. "In the beginning was the Word, "and the Word was with GOD, and the Word was "GOD. The ſame was in the beginning with "GOD. And the Word was made fleſh, and dwelt "among us."

I cannot help being of opinion that the Evangeliſt had here in his eye the impaſſioned deſcription of divine Wiſdom given by Solomon. Though Wiſdom is there perſonified, yet no one ever thought of detaching this attribute from the Deity, and of regarding it as a divine perſon equal to himſelf. What we render *Word*, ſignifies alſo *Wiſdom*, and then the whole would be obvious, the Wiſdom of GOD dwelt in Chriſt, it was imparted to him in a greater degree than uſual, as appears from his admirable doctrines, from his excellent precepts, and

his inimitable deportment. "The Word was made "flesh," that is, the wisdom of God resided in man. This was made evident by his discourses: "Never man spake like this man."

Phil. ii. 5—10. "Let this mind be in you "which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the "form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal "with God, but made himself of no reputation," (it should be rendered, who being in the form of God did not think this likeness to God a thing forcibly to be taken to himself, but emptied himself) "and took upon him the form of a servant, and be-"ing found in fashion as a man, he humbled him-"self, and became obedient unto death, even the "death of the cross: wherefore God also hath "highly exalted him, and given him a name which "is above every name, that at the name of Jesus "every knee should bow."

In this passage the Apostle enjoins humility, from the example of Christ, "who being in the "form of God," that is, endowed with those miraculous powers, which created a striking resemblance between him and the great Lord of nature, he did not think this resemblance to God a thing forcibly to be taken to himself, but "emptied "himself:" he made no ostentatious display of these extraordinary gifts and endowments, but demeaned

meaned himſelf ordinarily, as if no ſuch diſtinctions had belonged to him; "and took upon him "the form of a ſervant," appeared like a perſon of low condition; "and was made in the likeneſs "of men;" endowed with all the common qualities of human beings, influenced by the ſame paſſions and deſires, and ſubject to the ſame infirmities; "and being found in faſhion as a man," reſembling other men in his exterior appearance, "he humbled himſelf and became obedient to "death, even he death of the croſs;" in obedience to the will of his heavenly Father, and from love to men, he allowed himſelf to be reduced to the humbling ſituation of a malefactor, and to ſuffer that kind of death which is moſt ignominious; "where-"fore GOD alſo hath highly exalted him, and given "him a name which is above every other name;" for this his humility and voluntary ſubmiſſion to the divine will, GOD hath ſet him at the head of his church, and conferred upon him honours ſuch as never have been beſtowed on any other human being; "ſo that at his name every knee ſhall bow;" ſo that when the ſervices of other prophets and good men are recorded, and the honours which GOD has conferred upon them, it ſhall be acknowledged that they all fall ſhort of thoſe of Jeſus, and conſequently he will be had in higher veneration than they; "that every tongue ſhould confeſs that "Jeſus Chriſt is Lord to the glory of GOD the "Father;"

" Father;" the homage which we pay to Jeſus is to the glory of God the Father, whoſe gift he was, under whoſe appointment, as he himſelf tells us, he worked out our deliverance from the bondage of ſin and ignorance.

Of other proofs made uſe of to ſhew that Chriſt is God.

Great pains have been taken to ſhew that Chriſt is God, in conſequence of the ſame titles being applied to him as to the Father.

Many titles are applied to God which are not appropriate to him, but which are made uſe of in a lower or different ſenſe, in relation to creatures.

It has been inferred that Jeſus is God, from the ſame perfections being aſcribed to him as to the Father.

Some of the texts quoted for this purpoſe require explanation.

Heb. i. 8. " Unto the Son he ſaith, Thy throne, " O God, is for ever and ever." It ſhould be rendered, God is thy throne for ever and ever. It may be here remarked that commonly verſes 10, 11, and 12, of this chapter, are applied to Chriſt, whereas they ſhould be conſidered as addreſſed to God.

" Jeſus

" Jeſus Chriſt the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and " for ever." This refers to his doctrines, which will never be changed. " Heaven and earth ſhall " paſs away, but my words ſhall not paſs away."

Other paſſages of the like ſound ſhould be conſidered in their connection; detached quotations of Scripture ſhould never be allowed to prove any thing, till their force and meaning are made out from duly weighing the connection, as well as the import of the words uſed.

That Jeſus is GOD, has been inferred from the ſame works being aſcribed to him as to GOD.

He is ſaid to forgive ſin, which can only be the prerogative of one who is GOD. When Jeſus is ſaid to have power to forgive ſin, the meaning is, that he was commiſſioned by GOD to aſſure thoſe who were truly penitent, Gentiles as well as Jews, that their ſins would be forgiven.

Jeſus is ſaid to have created the *worlds*. The word which in our tranſlation is rendered worlds, ſhould have been rendered *ages*. The texts which have led perſons to regard him as the creator of the world, in direct oppoſition to the faith of the Jews and Patriarchs, ſimply refer to his being the author

author and head of the Chriſtian diſpenſation. In analogy to this, Iſaiah, ſpeaking of the ſetting up of the Chriſtian diſpenſation, ſays, " I create new " heavens and a new earth, and the former ones " ſhall not be remembered, neither ſhall they be " brought to mind any more. But ye ſhall rejoice " and exult in the world (or as it ſhould be ren- " dered in the age) to come which I ſhall create.'

He is ſaid " to uphold all things by the word of " his power;" that is, GOD's, not his own.

It is maintained that the like worſhip is given or commanded to be given to Jeſus as to Almighty GOD. The word in the original which we render worſhip, is by no means ſo reſtricted as only to ſignify that honour which is excluſively appropriated to GOD, but is uſed indifferently to expreſs the honour which is due to ſuperiors of all kinds, whether in heaven or on earth.

This will help us to underſtand the paſſage, " Let all the angels of GOD worſhip him." Let them reverence him, as being advanced to higher honours than they.

Again, the paſſages in which it is ſaid that all the heavenly hoſts, and all creatures, are ſaid to unite

unite in aſcribing "bleſſing, glory, and power, "unto him that ſitteth on the throne, and unto "the lamb for ever and ever;" no more prove him to be the object of religious adoration, than the paſſages, "and the people feared God and Samuel; "the people worſhipped God and the king;" prove Samuel and David entitled to divine worſhip.

John v. 23. "That all men ſhould honour the "Son as they honour the Father;" that is, That his claims as the Meſſiah be as generally admitted, as is the authority and ſupremacy of God the Father.

Should the caſe of Stephen be alledged, it ſhould be remembered that he was in a trance, and imagined he ſaw with his eyes the Lord Jeſus.

An argument might have been grounded on the benedictions in which the names of God and Chriſt are united, had it not been for the following text: Rev. i. 4, 5. "Grace be unto you and peace from "him which is, which was, and which is to come; "and from the *ſeven ſpirits* which are before the "throne." &c.

The common form of baptiſm has been ſuppoſed to ſupport the doctrine of Chriſt's divinity, as alſo that of the Holy Ghoſt.

Good

Good reaſons have been given to ſhew that our Saviour never meant, that the words "baptize in "the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the "Holy Ghoſt," ſhould be pronounced in the ceremony of baptiſm, but merely that the proper objects were to be waſhed with water as the mark of their profeſſion of that faith which came from God, which was declared by Jeſus, and which was confirmed by the Holy Ghoſt, or miraculous powers wrought by a divine energy.

It will be ſaid, if Jeſus be a mere man, what are we to make of the texts wherein he is ſaid to have pre-exiſted, "to have been before Abraham;" "to have come down from heaven?"

John viii. 58. "Before Abraham was I am." It ſhould be rendered, "I am he," or the Meſſiah. It refers to his appointment in the divine councils, to his preordination, as Mr. Cardale has with great ability ſhewn, and not to his pre-exiſtence; "for "he was fore-ordained before the foundation of "the world, but was made manifeſt in theſe latter "times." 1 Pet. i. 20. "Abraham ſaw my day, and "rejoiced;" he was made acquainted with the diſpenſation of the goſpel. In the ſame ſenſe in which it may be ſaid that the patriarch ſaw Chriſt's day, or his miniſtry, may it be ſaid that Chriſt was before

before him. This conſideration, I think, entirely removes the difficulty, and this ſort of language is not unuſual in the ſcriptures: See Iſaiah xlv. 1. "Thus ſaith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus "whom I hold faſt by the right hand," although that prince was then unborn.

Chriſt's "coming from heaven," and his being "ſent from GOD," merely ſignify his being inveſted with a divine commiſſion. Thus, when our Saviour aſks, (Matth. xxi. 25.) "The baptiſm of "John, was it from heaven;" that is, was it of divine authority.

Being "ſent from GOD," ſignifies being a prophet or divine meſſenger. For it is ſaid of John the Baptiſt, (John i. 6.) "that he was a man ſent "from GOD."

Chriſt's being ſent into the world, ſignifies his having a divine commiſſion, as a prophet or teacher, as appears from John xvii. 18. "As thou "haſt ſent me into the world, even ſo alſo have I "ſent them into the world."

"Proceeding forth and coming from GOD," "coming forth from the Father," and "coming "into the world," are forms of ſpeech uſed by Chriſt to expreſs his extraordinary commiſſion from

from GOD, and his being the Meſſiah. John viii. 42. "Jeſus ſaid unto them, I proceeded forth and "came from GOD: neither came I of myſelf, but "he ſent me." Here we have an explanation of what is meant by "proceeding forth," and "coming from GOD," viz. being ſent by him, which ſignifies his having an eſpecial divine commiſſion from him.

"When it was ſaid among the Jews," a learned writer obſerves,* "that any man *came from heaven*, "*from GOD*, they naturally and immediately underſtood it of coming as a prophet, with a divine commiſſion or meſſage."

John vi. 62. "What, and if ye ſhall ſee the Son "of Man aſcend up where he was before." Grotius is of opinion, that what Chriſt ſays of himſelf here, is applicable only to the divine wiſdom that dwelt in him; that is, as if he had ſaid, What, and if this heavenly wiſdom, by which you are now inſtructed and guided, aſcends together with him in whom it dwells, thoſe heavenly regions whence it firſt came. Dr. Lardner thinks, "that "our Lord intended by it only to intimate that he "ſhould not be always perſonally preſent with the "Jews to whom he ſpoke, but ſhould leave them."

* See Lindſey's Addreſs to the youth of the two Univerſities. Part ii. p. 69.

John

John iii. 13. "And no man hath aſcended up "to heaven, but he who came down from heaven; "the Son of Man, who is in heaven." Hear Mr. Wakefield's excellent explanation of this verſe:— "No one hath a *perfect knowledge* of the will of "God, but he who is immediately *commiſſioned of* "*God* to declare his will: even the Son of Man, "who has always an eſpecial communication with "God."

John xvii. 5. "And now, O Father, glorify "thou me with thine own ſelf, with the glory "which I had with thee before the world be-"gan!" Here he does not refer to any glory which he had actually enjoyed with the Father, but that which was ordained for him in the Father's councils.

You will perhaps ſay, Why did Chriſt make uſe of expreſſions ſo much adapted to miſlead? I anſwer, that the Jews would readily comprehend his meaning. Many expreſſions which ſeem to us harſh and uncouth, we may reſt aſſured, would appear to them eaſy and natural. An inſtance to this purpoſe you have in the following paſſage among others:

"Verily, verily, I ſay unto you, except ye eat "the fleſh of the Son of Man, ye have no life in "you.

"you. Whoſo eateth my fleſh, and drinketh my "blood, hath eternal life: and I will raiſe him up "at the laſt day. For my fleſh is meat indeed, "and my blood is drink indeed." Whoever finds no difficulty in putting a figurative ſenſe on theſe words, in oppoſition to a literal one, let him not complain at being urged to do the like with thoſe juſt quoted, in order to preſerve the ſimplicity of the goſpel doctrines, to make ſcripture conſiſtent with itſelf, and with reaſon.

I muſt now beg you would call to mind what I have before ſuggeſted with regard to the language of the Scriptures. The difficulties which I have had to obviate, are ſuch as have ariſen from careleſſneſs in ſettling the text of the New Teſtament, from miſtranſlation, and from ignorance of the force and turn of the phraſeology uſed in the Eaſtern countries.

I lay the chief ſtreſs on thoſe proofs of the Divine Unity which are founded on the expreſs teſtimony of the Jewiſh Scriptures: the language uſed in theſe is moſt explicit, and ſo far is it from being contradicted by any thing ſpoken by Jeſus and his apoſtles, that it is uniformly, on all occaſions, adopted by them. The Jews believed their JEHOVAH to have been one perſon. Had a doctrine ſo oppoſite to this, as is that of the Trinity, been a new

new tenet which Chriſtianity was to bring to light, it would have been announced as explicitly, as fully, and as clearly, by the Chriſtian Lawgiver, and by his followers, as the Divine Unity was by the Jewiſh lawgiver and his followers. So ſtrong is the evidence which this ſingle conſideration furniſhes, that it appears to me ſufficient of itſelf to determine the matter. When I farther conſider the whole body of evidence which has been ſo ably exhibited in the works of ſeveral divines of the preſent day, of which I have been able to give but a very haſty and imperfect ſketch, the believers in the Divine Unity appear to me to be in the caſe of thoſe, who, if an angel from heaven were to preach any other doctrine they ought to reject it. Much leſs ought they to be induced by detached paſſages, which have been corrupted by the hand of time, or by the careleſſneſs and ignorance of men, to give up a truth, which is ſanctioned by the profeſſion of faith, of patriarchs, of prophets, by the uniform conduct of Jeſus himſelf, (who worſhipped God with as much humility, and prayed to him with as much fervency as did Moſes, Samuel, or Iſaiah, or any of the old prophets) and by that of the Apoſtles; which has been profeſſed by the ableſt critics, by the greateſt ſcholars, and wiſeſt men of modern times, who have ventured to riſe above the ſhackles of ſubſcription to articles of faith of human compoſition.

If

If I am aſked why I am an Unitarian? I reply, becauſe the Divine Unity is a truth every where ſtamped on the works of nature; becauſe it is a truth of which it ſeems to have been the grand object of the Jewiſh diſpenſation to preſerve a knowledge in the world; a truth that ſhines forth in every page of the Jewiſh Scriptures; becauſe this ſame truth which was ſolemnly ſtated in the Moſaic Law, and enforced by ſuch awful ſanctions, is held forth in preciſely the ſame terms, without any alteration whatever in the diſcourſes of our Lord, and in thoſe of his Apoſtles, as they have been handed down to us by the writers of the goſpels and of the book of Acts. I am then an Unitarian on the ground that Moſes and the prophets, Jeſus and his apoſtles, were Unitarians. If I am aſked why I believe Jeſus to be a man? I anſwer, becauſe when I read his hiſtory I find it to be that of a man, who eats, drinks, ſleeps, is hungry, is wearied, feels pain, and dies. I find that thoſe with whom he converſed thought him to be a man. For theſe reaſons I believe Jeſus, the Chriſt of God, to have been a mere man, but endowed with divine wiſdom and the power of working miracles; the greateſt of all the prophets; the firſt among the ſervants of the moſt high God; the head of the Chriſtian Church; the Lord of Chriſtians, and their future judge.

My

My breaſt therefore ſhall be a temple to one divinity; no other perſon beſides the Supreme Father of all ſhall receive the homage of my heart; to Him alone my ſupreme reverence is due; he claims more than I can pay; my endeavours ſhall not be weakened, nor my attention diſtracted by two other perſons, each of whom is God. Jeſus I ſhall regard as the wiſeſt and firſt of the human race, the prince and the leader of life, the author of eternal ſalvation to them that believe: the greateſt prophet, the wiſeſt teacher, and the moſt perfect character, which the world ever ſaw. For him I ſhall cheriſh ſentiments of the warmeſt gratitude, and the moſt ardent affection.

Say no longer, ye advocates of abſurd creeds, that ye love Chriſt more, or that ye exalt him more, than the rational Chriſtian. Ye degrade the Deity, but do not exalt the man. Ye exhibit Deity ſuffering, bleeding, dying. The Unitarian exhibits man's nature ennobled by communicated excellence, reſembling God in all that is wiſe, and good, and benevolent, an exemplar only of what we may be at ſome future period, if we tread in his ſteps, and obſerve his precepts. The Athanaſian brings down the Divinity to the ſtandard of man, and vindicates the meaſure by reaſons ſuch as the idle refinements of the dark ages ſupply, and bluſhes not to call on the Chriſtian world to adhere to the

belief of an Infinite Being and a finite mortal being ſo united as to conſtitute one perſon; a fiction which for the magnitude of its abſurdity beggars every thing in the ſuperſtitions of the world. While the Unitarian repreſents his Saviour endowed with all thoſe powers and capacities, of which the nature of man is ſuſceptible, as far as they were neceſſary for the purpoſes of his miſſion.

Of the ſuppoſed Deity of the Holy Ghoſt.

If the Unity of God be allowed to have been eſtabliſhed in oppoſition to the divinity of Chriſt, it will be the leſs neceſſary to diſcuſs at large the ſuppoſed deity of the Holy Ghoſt, in order to remove the objections to the ſame important truth, as they have been grounded on that notion; for it has uſually happened that when the divinity of Chriſt has been given up, that of the Holy Ghoſt has never been retained. And indeed, were it not extremely eaſy to meet the advocates of the Trinity on any ground which they may chooſe, and to expoſe the abſurdities of their faith, we might ſecure ſome advantages, and render it ſtill eaſier to act our part in the conflict, if, in the firſt place, we directed our attacks againſt the Holy Ghoſt's divinity. In general the Arian and Unitarian writers have ſpared them

them the trouble of defending this tenet, leaving the fate of the Trinity to depend on the perſon of Chriſt.

By the Holy Ghoſt, the comforter, in the New Teſtament, is meant the divine energy imparted to Chriſt and his followers, whereby they were able to work miracles.

It would be as, or rather more, reaſonable to make the ſpirit of Chriſt a perſon diſtinct from Chriſt, as it is to make the Spirit of God a perſon diſtinct from God; for the Scriptures inform us, that "God is a ſpirit;" reaſon would then naturally lead us to conclude, that when the ſpirit of ſuch a being is mentioned, we are to underſtand by the term his active energies.

That the term, as uſed in Scripture, means a power imparted by him to work miracles, will appear from comparing Matth. xii. 28, "But if I caſt out dæ-"mons by the *Spirit* of God, then is the kingdom "of God come unto you;" with Luke xi. 20. "But if I with the *finger* of God caſt out dæmons, "no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon "you." Alſo from Numb. xi. 17. "And I will "take of the ſpirit which is upon thee, (Moſes) "and will put it upon them." And in verſes 25,

 26, it

26, it is ſaid, "And the Lord came down in a "cloud, and ſpake unto him, and took of the ſpirit "that was upon him, and gave it unto the ſeventy "elders. And it came to paſs, that when the ſpirit "reſted upon them, they propheſied and did not "ceaſe."

Attend to the following paſſages, among many others that might be quoted, Iſa. xi. 1—3. "And "the ſpirit of the LORD ſhall reſt upon him, the "ſpirit of wiſdom and underſtanding, and a ſpirit "of counſel and might, the ſpirit of knowledge "and of the fear of the LORD." Iſa. lxii. 3. "I "will pour my ſpirit on thy ſeed." Joel xi. 28. "I will pour out my ſpirit upon all fleſh." By ſpirit cannot here be meant a perſon, an intelligent agent, but a power, a gift, a favour, a bleſſing.

If it be ſaid that the Holy Ghoſt is ſpoken of as a perſon; it may be replied that the wiſdom of God, his power, his goodneſs, and mercy, are perſonified; they are repreſented as performing acts, and as objects of invocation; death is frequently perſonified; as is alſo charity, in 1 Cor. xiii. With as much reaſon might theſe be ſeverally conſidered as perſons, as the Holy Ghoſt.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

OF THE DIVINE PLACABILITY.

I have endeavoured to ſhew, that the conſideration of the ſtate of the gentile world at the time of our Saviour's appearing fully warrants the concluſion, that the revelation of a perfect rule of conduct, and authentic aſſurances of the neceſſity and efficacy of its obſervance to obtain the divine favour both here and hereafter, would be regarded as communications of the higheſt value.

This doctrine involves in it the *abſolute placability* of the Deity, or his diſpoſition to reward his creatures in proportion to the ſhare of goodneſs which they poſſeſs, and that freely, from his own good-will, without ſeeking any price or ranſom for favours thus beſtowed.

God, if he be a good and benevolent being, can need no inducements to accept of our good deeds, beſide evidences of their proceeding from upright deſigns. It was impoſſible for God to enhance the value of goodneſs more than by connecting it with his approbation, with peace of conſcience, and the trueſt enjoyment here, and with life everlaſting hereafter.

As moral agents, it is our great buſineſs to be ſeeking the favour of God, in which our true happineſs conſiſts. When we fall into ſin we deviate from the courſe which leads to this end; we put ourſelves out of the way of the bleſſings which thoſe ſhare, who wander not from it. Hence the greater and the more frequent our deviations, the more imminent is the danger of our finally falling ſhort of this invaluable object, I mean the divine favour.

The courſe of goodneſs in which we are commanded to perſevere, is a courſe of exertion. Our ſins may be conſidered as injuring and debilitating thoſe powers by which alone we are capable of making exertion. They prevent our advancing, and even throw us back in this courſe. Until theſe wounds, as they may not improperly be regarded, which we thus inflict upon ourſelves, are healed, and the debility which we thus contract is removed, our great buſineſs is at a ſtand, and we muſt be looked upon as in the way to certain ruin; that is, until by ſerious meditation and prayer we have brought our minds to be fully ſenſible of our ill conduct, and to form unſhaken reſolutions to forſake it, we are aliens from God, and cannot expect to be crowned with his favour.

Our

Our ſins may farther be conſidered as lets, which hinder thoſe mercies from reaching us, which flow from the natural goodneſs of God; but theſe lets being removed, the future mercies of our heavenly Father, thoſe that are appropriate to the good and worthy, will ſtill be ours.

To induce him to pardon ſin, God requires nought but thorough penitence, real genuine contrition, ſuch as produce reformation and amendment of heart and life; nor would he even require theſe, if the order of his moral government did not make the requiſition abſolutely neceſſary. God is the enemy of ſin, only as it deſtroys that moral order on which the happineſs of the univerſe depends. He has appointed miſery and wretchedneſs to be the conſequences of ſin, only as it militates againſt the regulations on which this order is founded. When the ſinner reflects on the tendency and alarming effects of his deviations, ſucceſsfully guards againſt them, and obeys the laws of God, he ſhares the bleſſings which are inſeparably connected with the obſervance of thoſe laws.

The ſlighteſt obſervation, aided by a habit of reflecting, will convince us, that there is an inſeparable connection between virtue and happineſs, founded in the eſtabliſhed order of things; which at once overthrows the notion of its being conferred

ferred upon us in conſequence of Chriſt's ſufferings and death.

The evil of ſin cannot be ſet forth in any way more ſtrongly than by the ſorrow and contrition which muſt be felt before pardon can be obtained; and in a ſtill more awful manner by the miſery denounced againſt thoſe who live and die impenitent.

That God forgives any on account of the ſufferings of another, and not upon their own repentance ſolely; and that he is led by the ſufferings of an innocent being to ſhew favour to the guilty, are ſuppoſitions ſo manifeſtly abſurd and pernicious, as to render it impoſſible they ſhould be entertained by any except thoſe whoſe prejudices have been early formed, and ſtrongly rivetted; or by thoſe who, rather than correct their evil habits and corrupt inclinations, adopt doctrines which ſuit beſt with the indulgence of theſe.

Would the ſufferings of one of your innocent children be any motive with you to pardon a guilty child? If he was inſenſible of his crime, and did not repent, would you accept of ſuch a compenſation? If he ſaw his error, and ſeemed truly ſorry for his miſconduct, would you require it? If *your goodneſs* and wiſdom are ſuch as to lead *you* to pardon the guilty when penitent, how much more will *he* do it

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in whom is *perfect goodneſs*, and who can never be impoſed upon as to its genuineneſs, a diſadvantage under which you labour, and which would in ſome meaſure palliate your being unrelenting? You would think it an impeachment of your clemency to accept of the tortures of a good ſlave, or even of a brute, and much more ſo, were one of your children the victim, in order to receive into your good graces one who had corrected his error. And ſhall a conduct which it would ſhock you to be charged with, be aſcribed to GOD?

The nature of human merit and demerit may be illuſtrated in various ways. Suppoſe *piety* and *virtue* to be that *direction* of actions performed by moral agents, by which the order and harmony of the divine government are preſerved; and that *impiety* and *ſin* are *deviations* from this direction.

Things are ſo conſtituted, that men, when they commence moral agents, become ſenſible of high pleaſure and ſatisfaction when their actions are within the line of right direction, namely, that of piety and virtue; of pain and anguiſh when any other is given them.

It is by means of theſe ſenſations, of which we have been wiſely made ſuſceptible, that the diſpoſition of loving virtue and that of abhorring vice is formed within us.

Occaſional

Occaſional pains attend a courſe of actions that is within the line of virtuous direction, and temporary pleaſures ariſe from certain deviations from it; theſe circumſtances preſent themſelves with various degrees of force, and form oppoſite forces which proportionately militate againſt our perſeverance in the line of virtuous direction, and we are accordingly ſet at a ſtand, or made to move in a different or contrary direction. This happens when the oppoſite force is ſufficient to overcome the force with which a ſenſe of the pleaſures of virtue and of the pains of vice would impel in a virtuous direction. By *means* within the controul of the agent, the force that favours virtue may be much increaſed. Theſe *means* conſiſt of certain conſiderations, ſuch as the following: the pleaſures of virtue are ever increaſing; even the pains which attend it lead to pleaſure; alſo the pains of vice increaſe; its pleaſures terminate in pain, and at length are wholly converted into pains. Theſe conſiderations are founded upon experience and a juſt diſcernment of the plan of the divine government. By theſe means it is, that men are ſo generally diſpoſed to perſevere in a line of virtuous conduct, and to return to it after having deviated from it, ſo that in this world all men would finally become virtuous, were it not for the brevity of the term of human life, and the imbecility which age and other cauſes bring on. Theſe being removed to a certain

tain degree, no man would die a vicious character. We are ſo made, our feelings and faculties are ſuch, and the conſtitution of things has been ſo ordered, that, if a ſufficient length of time, and ſufficient ſtrength were allowed us, whether we commenced our courſe in the cauſe of virtue or in that of vice, we ſhould ultimately be determined to move only in that of virtue. The tendency of the growing pleaſures of virtue, and that of the growing pains of vice, is the ſame, and act with equal force in inclining us to virtue.

Have we not here invincible reaſons in favour of a final reſtitution? Have we not proofs of the ſtrongeſt kind in theſe deductions, that finally all the creatures of God will be happy?

When a ſinner is reclaimed, he confines his actions within the line of direction whence he had wandered; the bleſſings which flow in this direction of neceſſity become his. This account reſolves the acceptance and good effects of penitence, and the rewards of amendment to that moral order which comes within our obſervation as much as the phyſical, and which is no leſs manifeſt; and the moral order has again for its cauſe the benevolence of the Creator. Is there not here ample ſecurity for the final triumph of virtue, and the utter extinc-

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tion of vice? Of what uſe then is imputed merit? What good effects can poſſibly reſult from it? Before this can be ſhewn to avail any thing, the notion of moral order now laid down muſt be overturned.

Agreeably to this notion the obſervance of the moral law is ſufficiently ſecured, and its honour ſufficiently vindicated by the homage rendered it by the ſinner, when forſaking his evil courſes, he ſeeks for peace and ſecurity in the obſervance of it; by the puniſhment that is conſtituted by the pains in which his diſregard of it ended; by the greater difficulty of keeping in a virtuous direction, after, than before deviation, which is owing to the pleaſures of virtue affecting him leſs, while thoſe of vice affect him more; by its being ſo ordered, that the greater lengths any one goes in his diſregard of it, and the longer he continues thus to act, the greater are his pains.

The obſervance of the divine law and its honour are ſufficiently ſecured by theſe proviſions. Theſe proviſions, beſides being amply ſufficient to induce men to pay a due regard to piety and virtue, and to ſhun profaneneſs and vice, are wiſe and rational, worthy of the Creator, and in perfect analogy with his other proceedings. In order fully to expoſe, I need only aſk, in connection with this ſtatement, how

how the infliction of puniſhment, upon an innocent perſon of infinite or very tranſcendant merit for the wickedneſs of others, can ſecure theſe ends? How does ſuch a ſcheme aggrandiſe the juſtice of God, and the honour of his laws?

Happineſs in heaven or on earth ariſes only from conſcious virtue; the imputation of the virtue of another cannot communicate it to any.

The imputation of virtue will ſignify nothing, unleſs the feelings of it can alſo be transferred. Does the orthodox believer feel the pleaſures which immaculate purity, ſuch as that of Chriſt, confers? If this be the caſe, one would be almoſt tempted to wiſh, rather, to dream with ſuch a devotee, than to behold the truth with the unclouded eyes of the rational Chriſtian. But deluſion has never been carried ſo far; error, though it is not deſtitute of privileges, has none ſo valuable. As I cannot be conſcious of the virtues which belong to another, the imputation of them to me can be of no real benefit; ſo alſo is it no kindneſs to me, that another ſhould be puniſhed for my vices, unleſs he feel the guilt of them inſtead of me; but we are juſtly warranted from our own experience in aſſerting, that in morals ſuch transfers are abſolutely impoſſible.

If we abuſe nôt the clemency of our Maker, he can want no inducement to exerciſe it. But if he did, and if moral transfers were poſſible and alſo fitting, no creature has merits to ſpare, and had he them to ſpare, there is not in the compaſs of nature, proper compenſation to be found, which can be offered for them. It is clear then that a ſinner cannot receive any beneſit from a creature ſuffering for his demerits. A Creator cannot ſuffer. But ſuppoſing the perſon who ſuffers be made up of both. But who in his ſober ſenſes can believe, that finite and infinite, created and uncreated, omnipotence and weakneſs, omnipreſence and a bulk of three cubic feet, could ever mix together and form a compound?

It appears at firſt view ſurpriſing, that the enlargedneſs of mind, and the clearneſs of apprehenſion, which ſo much characterize the preſent age, ſhould not, ere this, have brought into univerſal diſcredit, the childiſh and wicked conceits which were vented in an infant ſtate of the world; that a few poor prejudiced beings, and clamorous unprincipled ſeekers of gain, ſhould be able to hold the world in ſubjection to miſchievous abſurdities. What time does it take, what labour does it require, to bring men to follow the maxims of reaſon and common ſenſe! It is humbling to literary pride to learn, that the moſt ſucceſsful efforts of thinking perſons,

perſons, who ſtrive to enlighten the public, can ſecure no higher end than the eſtabliſhment of theſe maxims. Nor is this peculiar to religious and political matters; it ariſes from the nature of man, rather than from the nature of things. It is the ſame in all arts. Firſt attempts are rude and awkward, and the man of ſcience, with his demonſtrations and corollaries, has only the merit of teaching us to practiſe on plain and ſimple principles, which when once brought to light, we think all mightily eaſy, and ſuch as we ſhould ourſelves have hit upon. The rational theologian, ſhould he ſucceed in his endeavours, is only entitled to the praiſe of bringing men to think as they would have thought with their Bibles in their hands, and the benefits of ordinary helps, had fathers, ſchoolmen, and partial reformers, never written.

The natural placability of the Deity, or his diſpoſition to pardon the ſins of his creatures being penitent, is no leſs clearly taught in the Old Teſtament than is the Unity of God. The words in which his clemency to penitent ſinners is declared, are as expreſs and ſolemn as thoſe in which his ſole ſupremacy is maintained. (See Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.) "And the LORD paſſed by him, and proclaimed "the LORD, the Lord GOD, merciful and gracious, "long-ſuffering, abundant in goodneſs and truth, "keeping mercy for thouſands, forgiving iniquity, "tranſgreſſion,

" tranſgreſſion, and ſin." Alſo, (Exod. xiv. 7.) " The LORD is long-ſuffering and of great mercy, " forgiving iniquity and tranſgreſſion." The ſame worthy and juſt ſentiments we meet with in Pſalm xxv. 6. " Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies, " and thy loving-kindneſs, for they have been ever " of old. Remember not the ſins of my youth, nor " my tranſgreſſions; according to thy mercy re- " member thou me, for thy goodneſs ſake, O Lord." And in the New Teſtament we are ſaid, (Rom. iii. 24.) " to be juſtified freely by the grace (favour) of " GOD." How *freely* we may aſk, if, as ſome tell us, GOD has received full ſatisfaction? how *by favour*, if Jeſus Chriſt paid a full price for our redemption?

If words are capable of conveying clear and unequivocal ideas, the paſſages above quoted, repreſent JEHOVAH, as a being naturally placable, who pardons his erring offſpring when ſincerely penitent for their offences. They ſet forth his own clemency, as the ſole ſpring and cauſe of his forgiving ſin.

But it will be aſked, what meant all the ſacrifices and other rites of the Jewiſh law, which were connected with the divine forgiveneſs of ſin?

Sacrifices

Sacrifices were to be accompanied by pious diſpoſitions, as we learn from Jer. ii. 9. "I will "ſacrifice unto thee with the voice of thankſgi-"ving." This is the reaſon why the offerings of Abel were more acceptable than thoſe of Cain. Without theſe diſpoſitions the ſacrifices were of no value, "the ſacrifice of the wicked being an "abomination to the LORD." See Prov. xv. 8. The grand end and uſe of theſe ſacrifices, as far as they were of a religious nature, were to excite theſe diſpoſitions, as is evident from the following paſſages: Pſ. iv. 5. "Offer unto GOD the ſacri-"fices of righteouſneſs." Pſal. l. 14. "Sacrifice "unto GOD thankſgiving." ver. 23. "Whoſo ſa-"crificeth praiſe, glorifieth me." Pſ. li. 17. "The "ſacrifices of GOD are a broken ſpirit." Of theſe rites ſome were declaratory of the conduct of the Deity. Thus, the high prieſt's ſending the goat that bore the ſins of the children of Iſrael to an unknown land, intimated the Almighty's entire forgiveneſs of thoſe who had repented of their ſins, and conformed to the Jewiſh ritual.*

* Whatever may have been the original idea on which the practice of offering ſacrifices as religious acts was founded, it will, I apprehend, be admitted on all hands, that it exiſted in the world long before the Jewiſh ritual was ſet on foot. The beſt writers allow that there was much in that ritual, which would have been left out, had it not been for the low and unimproved ſtate of the Jews, which made it neceſſary that rites and ceremonies ſhould be interwoven with their religion: Theſe were adopted to promote certain diſpoſi-

tions

Sacrifices were no more equivalents for ſin than are prayer, the Lord's Supper, or Baptiſm. They were teſts of obedience, or teſtimonies of certain feelings of devotion towards GOD, of averſion to ſin, and of reſolutions to part with it.

tions and affections which were required to accompany them. And why may we not ſuppoſe that this was the reaſon why ſacrifices were allowed to make a part of the Jewiſh religion? We may naturally imagine that at their firſt inſtitution, the original deſign of the admiſſion of theſe rites would be properly attended to, but that in courſe of time their purpoſe would be miſapprehended, men would acquieſce in the mere performance of them, and altogether diſregard the cultivation of that ſtate of mind by which they ought to have been attended. The following paſſages refer to this abuſe, and will agree with the whole of the account now given. Pſ. li. 16, 17. "For "thou deſireſt not ſacrifice, elſe would I give it thee. Thou de- "lighteſt not in burnt-offering. The ſacrifices of the LORD are a "broken ſpirit." Hoſea vi. 6. "To what purpoſe is the multi- "tude of your ſacrifices to me, ſaith the Lord? I am full of the "burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beaſts. Bring no more "vain oblations. Waſh ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of "your doings; ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well; ſeek judgment, "relieve the oppreſſed, judge the fatherleſs, and plead for the wi- "dows." Iſ. i. 11, &c. "For I deſired mercy, and not ſacrifice, "and the knowledge of GOD more than burnt-offerings." Micah vi. 7, 8. "Will the LORD be pleaſed with thouſands of rams, and "ten thouſands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firſtborn for my "tranſgreſſion, the fruit of my body for the ſin of my ſoul? He "hath ſhewn thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD "require of thee, but to do juſtly, to love mercy, and walk humbly "with GOD?" Had theſe ſacrifices, as is commonly ſuppoſed, been typical of the ſufferings and death of our Saviour, would not theſe events have been contraſted with it, rather than the moral virtues and pious affections?

That

That God appointed a good life to be the ſole requiſite to obtain his favour; and repentance and amendment the grounds of his forgiving ſin, are the doctrines which were held under the Jewiſh diſpenſation. Doctrines, it muſt be owned, every way reaſonable, worthy of God, honourable to his perfections, and encouraging to man.

Let us next ſee whether our Saviour advanced any thing in oppoſition to, or whether he confirmed theſe notions of the divine conduct, which the faithful of the ancient world were taught to entertain.

Our Saviour taught no other method of acceptance with God than piety and the practice of virtue. From him we hear of no other way of wiping away guilt, but by having a true ſenſe of our wrong conduct, and ſincere reſolutions to forſake our wicked ways. From the prayer which he framed for his diſciples, we learn that God needs nothing to induce him to forgive ſinners, but that ſtate of mind in them, which will prevent his clemency from being abuſed. See Matt. vi. 14. "For if ye forgive men their treſpaſſes, your Hea-"venly Father will alſo forgive you." The conditions of obtaining the divine favour are expreſsly admitted by Chriſt himſelf, to be no other than thoſe laid down in the Jewiſh law. Conſult Luke x. 25—28.

The doctrines of its being the will of God to regard a pious and virtuous life, and ſincere repentance, as the conditions of aceeptance and pardon, ſtand on the ſame ground with the divine Unity. They were the doctrines which patriarchs believed, which Moſes publiſhed in his law, which Jeſus ſanctioned by expreſs teſtimony, and which were preached to the gentiles by his Apoſtles. See Acts xvii. 30. "And the times of this ignorance God "winked at; but now commandeth all men every "where to *repent:* becauſe he hath appointed a "day, in which he will judge the world in righte-"ouſneſs."

In relation to the natural benevolence and clemency of the Deity, as well as his unity, the rule I have followed, is to make out the ſentiments which the Old Teſtament inculcates, and then to proceed to what is ſaid by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, as recorded in the Goſpels, and in the Acts of the Apoſtles. This is a rule the excellence of which cannot be impeached. No one will be hardy enough to ſay, that it is neceſſary that we ſhould believe more in order to be ſaved, than the firſt converts to Chriſtianity were required to believe by the firſt preachers of it. All that was required of them, was faith in one God, the governor of the world, and in the divine miſſion of Jeſus; the neceſſity

ceſſity of repentance for ſin, and holineſs of life. If this rule be admitted, we ſhall have one that is equitable and well adapted to the ſtate of the bulk of mankind, and which will deſerve to be characterized as that way in which "the wayfaring man "though a fool ſhall not err." But if it be neceſſary that you ſhould underſtand all the Epiſtles, in ſeveral of which it was ſaid, at the time of their being written, there were many things hard to be underſtood; it ſurely cannot be ſaid that our Saviour's "yoke is eaſy, or his burden light." I mean not to depreciate the value of the Epiſtles, I am moſt thankful for thoſe invaluable compoſitions; I only wiſh to expoſe the conduct of thoſe, who would build important doctrines on the dark phraſeology that frequently occurs in them. If any doctrine could be fairly deduced from incidental obſervations made in theſe, it ought to be deemed as rather of a curious nature, than any way neceſſary to ſalvation. It becomes us to be very cautious in building articles of faith on this foundation, ſince this as well as tradition has been made the ground work of all the Popiſh abſurdities.

On the ſcheme for which I have contended, I ſhall be aſked, What end did the death of Chriſt anſwer? Was it not an atonement for ſin? Are not his merits what juſtify us before God? What is meant

meant by his death being termed a ſacrifice for ſin? How are we to underſtand the many texts of Scripture that refer to this ſubject?

When Chriſt, inſtructing his Apoſtles reſpecting his death, was remonſtrated with by Peter, who it is evident had no idea of its expiatory nature, he intimated nothing of its being neceſſary to induce God to forgive ſinners, or of its being in any ſenſe propitiatory. He died then that he might in his own perſon furniſh us with a proof, that as God raiſed him from the dead, ſo alſo he would raiſe us. He could not without dying eſtabliſh on a firm baſis the doctrine of a future life. It was his death that gave the ſtrongeſt confirmation to the truth of his doctrine. This doctrine, in obſerving which we attain to new life, are purified from the pollution of ſin, and raiſed to the hope of heaven, would have wanted that force of evidence, by which it is rendered capable of theſe glorious and happy effects, had not Jeſus died. Hence it is ſaid, that "he dyed that we might have life;" "that we are "waſhed from our ſins in his blood;" and "that "by his ſufferings we are healed."

His death not only eſtabliſhed the validity of his doctrine, but alſo excited attention to it as he himſelf foretold, in the remarkable words, "If the Son "of

" of Man be lifted up from the earth, he will draw " all men unto him."

Were it a true doctrine that Chriſt made atonement for our ſins by his death, it would appear moſt ſtrange, that the pleas urged to influence the judge on the day of retribution to paſs a favourable deciſion, and the reaſons ſet forth by the judge in juſtification of his deciſion, are grounded ſolely upon the good works of the parties; the merits of the judge, as imputed to them, are not even hinted at. The dead are repreſented as addreſſing their judge, " We have propheſied and we have caſt out " dæmons in thy name;" but they make no mention of the merits of his death and ſufferings. When he welcomes the good to partake of everlaſting happineſs, he enumerates their charitable and beneficent deeds, but ſays nothing of his own righteouſneſs being imputed to them. It is ſingular alſo, that Peter, when ſtating the heinouſneſs of the crime into which the Jewiſh rulers had fallen, by putting Chriſt to death, never once mentions the atonement which has been ſuppoſed to have been wrought out by it.

When I regard the death of Chriſt as neceſſary to eſtabliſh the belief of the reſurrection, as neceſſary to confirm the doctrines which relate to piety and morals which he taught, and as ſo conducive

to

to the promulgation of theſe doctrines;—when beſides I regard it as the death of a being whoſe conduct had been moſt blameleſs and deſerving; who underwent it in obedience to the divine will, and from pure love to men;—I conſider it as the moſt important event that ever took place on the theatre of the world.

Thoſe who are commonly termed orthodox, without being able to produce from the Scriptures any reaſoning founded upon the ſuppoſed doctrine of Chriſt's ſufferings and death being expiatory of ſin, or to deduce any rational conſiſtent account of it, bring forward numerous detached paſſages in its ſupport. I ſhall produce thoſe on which the greateſt ſtreſs has been uſually laid, avoiding ſtudiouſly, as I have hitherto done, all nice critical inveſtigations, and contenting myſelf with that interpretation which approves itſelf moſt readily to the unbiaſſed underſtandings of men, and which has received the ſanction of the ableſt critics and commentators.

The texts which repreſent the death of Chriſt as a ſacrifice for ſin:—

Iſaiah liii. 10. " when thou ſhalt make his ſoul an offering for ſin."

Such

Such was the ſtate of the world, ſo great was the hold which ſin had in it, that it could not be reformed but by a revelation like the Chriſtian; and this revelation could be ſufficiently atteſted in no other way, than by the ſufferings and death of the promulgator of it; hence the prophet, looking forward to theſe events, is led naturally enough, when we conſider that he was a Jew, to repreſent the perſon who was appointed by God to fall in ſo good a cauſe, namely, in order to overturn the dominion of ſin, as having his life made an offering for it.

Matt. xx. 28. "To give his life a ranſom for many."

The term rendered ranſom means ſimply an expedient by which deliverance is wrought, and does by no means, as is generally imagined, always ſignify a price paid. In this ſenſe the verb derived from it is uſed: Luke xiv. 21. "We truſted that "it had been he who ſhould have redeemed Iſrael;" that is, have redeemed them from the Roman yoke. Thus Chriſt, by giving up his life in confirmation of his doctrine, was the means of reſcuing men from the yoke of ſin.

Matt. xxvi. 28. "This is my blood of the New "Covenant, which is ſhed for many for the remiſſion "of ſins."

Our

Our Saviour may here be conſidered as ſaying, My life muſt be ſacrificed, my blood muſt be ſhed, I muſt die, in order to riſe again triumphantly, and to give validity to the doctrine of pardon on repentance, and to that of a future life, which are about to be preached to the world.

From the ſcene of Gethſemane it has been inferred that our Saviour's mind muſt have been oppreſſed by a ſenſe of the guilt of the ſins of the whole body of the elect; the proſpects of death and of the ſufferings previous to it being ſuppoſed inſufficient to produce the amazing anguiſh and diſtreſs under which he laboured. Theſe concluſions have been drawn in conſequence of perſons having entertained falſe notions of true greatneſs of character, of their not conſidering the great ſenſibility which our Saviour poſſeſſed, and the peculiar circumſtances in which he was placed. It has not often happened that martyrs have been acquainted with the length to which their ſufferings may be carried when they make the firſt ſtand. Our Saviour foreſaw all the painful incidents that were to befall him. He knew he ſhould be betrayed by his friends, and forſaken by the moſt faithful of them. He had been inſtructed as to all the different methods which his enemies would purſue in order to torture him, and to render his ſituation as ignominious, and his pains as exquiſite,

ſite, as poſſible. This fore-knowledge which he had of his ſufferings, and his delicate frame being conſidered, we ſhall be at no loſs in accounting for the effects which the near proſpect of them produced on both his body and mind.

Matt. xxvii. 46. "My God, my God, why haſt "thou forſaken me?" Biſhop Pearce's remark on this paſſage appears to me juſt: Theſe words, he ſays, 'moſt probably were not uttered by way 'of complaint, but by way of pointing out to the 'ſpectators the twenty-ſecond Pſalm, which began 'with theſe words, and which is prophetical of 'Jeſus the ſpeaker.'

Mark xv. 28. "And he was numbered with "tranſgreſſors."

He was put to death as a malefactor, and in company with malefactors.

John i. 29. "Behold the Lamb of God, who "taketh away the ſins of the world."

Behold the meek and lowly teacher, who by his life and doctrine, ſufferings and death, will deſtroy ſin, and reſtore mankind to virtue and happineſs.

John

John vi. 51. "The bread which I will give, is my fleſh, which I will give for the life of the world."

Since the world muſt have remained in ſin, and experienced all its conſequences, unleſs our Saviour ſhould die to confirm his doctrines, he here declares his readineſs to ſubmit to death to bring about ſo great an end.

John xi. 49, 50. Caiaphas the high prieſt ſays, "Ye know nothing at all, nor conſider that it is "expedient for us that one ſhould die for the peo- "ple, and that the whole nation periſh not."

Ye are not ſenſible that it is better that this perſon, who is conſidered by many as the future king of the Jews, and who, it is probable, may cauſe ſedition, ſhould be put to death, than that by ſparing him we ſhould run the riſk of being attacked and deſtroyed by the Romans our preſent maſters.

Acts xx. 28. "Which he has purchaſed with "his own blood.

True Chriſtians belong to the church of Chriſt, in conſequence of their obeying his precepts and obſerving his ordinances, which were proved to be of divine authority and obligatory by his death, hence

hence he may be ſaid to purchaſe his church with his blood.

Rom. iii. 24, 25. "Being juſtified freely by his "grace through the redemption that is in Jeſus "Chriſt; whom God hath ſet forth to be a propiti- "ation, thro' faith in his blood, to declare his right- "couſneſs for the remiſſion of ſins that are paſt."

We muſt not interpret the term, redemption, ſo as to make it inconſiſtent with what the Apoſtle here ſays, namely, that we are juſtified *freely*. Indeed the meaning of the term is given us by the Apoſtle himſelf, Eph. i. 7. "In whom we have "redemption through his blood, the forgiveneſs of "ſins." In conſequence of the death of Chriſt we have been favoured with a religion, which has delivered us from our ſins, which has induced us to forſake them, and which aſſures us, that if we are truly penitent, our paſt tranſgreſſions will be forgiven us. See alſo Col. i. 14. The term which is here rendered propitiation, ſhould be rendered *propitiatory* or *mercy-ſeat*. The Apoſtle ſays that God "hath ſet forth Chriſt to be the mercy-ſeat in "his own blood:" referring to the practice under the law of ſprinkling blood on the mercy-ſeat. God has ſet him out to be ſo "to declare his right- "couſneſs;" the mercy-ſeat being the place where

God

God ſpake and declared his pleaſure. It was there that God always appeared. Paul here intimates that we are to learn the will of God from a Saviour who died in order to riſe again, and to confirm the truth of his doctrine.* Vid. Locke in loc.

Rom. iv. 25. "Who was delivered for our of-"fences, and raiſed again for our juſtification."

It was neceſſary for Chriſt to die, in order to prove that religion to be from God, which was to incline men to forſake their ſins. Our offences were the cauſe of his being delivered; had mankind never offended, he would never have ſuffered and died; thus it was that *he was delivered for our offences.* It was alſo neceſſary that he ſhould be raiſed again, otherwiſe we could never have been certain that God even regarded favourably our pious and virtuous conduct, much leſs that he would in conſequence of it confer upon us eternal life.

* 'It appears the mercy-ſeat was the place or ſtation whence God 'declared his mind to the Jews by Moſes; and hence the propriety 'of Chriſt's being compared to a mercy-ſeat, as God did by him 'publiſh his will to the univerſe in general. This alluſion ſeems 'beautiful and ſignificant, and conveys the idea of a divine com-'miſſion to reveal the counſels of heaven, and tranſact affairs of the 'greateſt moment on our behalf.' Vide Graham's Letters on the Atonement, p. 50.

Rom.

Rom. v. 9. "Much more being now juſtified "by his blood."

We are made righteous, we are induced to be pious and holy, by his religion, which he confirmed by his death.

1 Cor. vi. 20. "For ye are bought with a price."

You ought to conform to the precepts of your great maſter, not merely becauſe they may be ſhewn to be fit and proper, but alſo becauſe they form part of a religion which he died to confirm. 2 Cor. v. 21. "For he made him to be ſin for us, "who knew no ſin." For our benefit, by the appointment of God, he, though a model of every excellence, met with a treatment which would have ſuited with his being the greateſt criminal.

Gal. iii. 10. "Chriſt has redeemed us from the "curſe of the law, being made a curſe for us."

Things under the Jewiſh conſtitution that were accurſed, were in general devoted to deſtruction. Hence, in a figurative way of ſpeaking, Chriſt may be ſaid to be accurſed for us, in conſequence of his devoting himſelf to death for us.

Eph.

Eph. ii. 13. "Ye who ſometimes were afar off, "are made nigh by the blood of Chriſt."

In conſequence of the new diſpenſation, which was eſtabliſhed by the death of him by whom it was introduced, ye who were before aliens, are made partakers of the ſame privileges with the peculiar people of God.

Eph. v. 2. "Chriſt alſo hath loved us, and given "himſelf for us, an offering, and a ſacrifice* to "God, of a ſweet-ſmelling ſavour."

His obedience to the divine will even unto death was for our benefit. This cheerful obedience, on account of its reference to his own appointment, and to our deliverance, muſt have been highly pleaſing to Almighty God.

Col. i. 20. "Having made peace through the "blood of his croſs."

† 'Many other things beſides the death of Chriſt are expreſsly 'called ſacrifices by the ſacred writers; and if it be univerſally al-'lowed that they are ſo called by way of alluſion only, why may 'not the ſame be the caſe with the death of Chriſt alſo. Is it not 'owing to ſome prejudice, that the figure is not as obvious in the 'one caſe as in the other?" See Theological Repoſitory, vol. i. p. 132. The papers on this ſubject in that work are of the moſt ſatisfactory kind, and highly deſerving of peruſal.

The

The doctrines and promiſes which he confirmed by his death have formed the minds of men to piety and virtue. Hence they are ſaid to be at peace with GOD, who, in their gentile ſtate, ſeemed by the whole of their conduct to diſregard his authority, and to ſet him at defiance.

Heb. vii. 27. "Who needed not daily to offer "ſacrifices, firſt for his own ſins, and then for the "people; for this he did once, when he offered up "himſelf."

To accompliſh the reformation of the world, the introduction of a diſpenſation ſuch as the Chriſtian was neceſſary; this could only be done by the head of it conſenting to ſuffer and die to atteſt its divine original. It was not neceſſary that he ſhould die, or be offered up on his own account; he ſubmitted to this ſolely for our benefit, to deliver us from the dominion of ſin.

In chap. viii. 3, of the ſame book, a ſimilar idea is held forth. Chriſt gave up his life for the benefit of the world, to confirm a doctrine that furniſhes motives which overcome the influence of ſin, which deſtroy its power, and which enables them by whom it is properly received to ſhake off its yoke, and to commence a life of piety and virtue. He died not to take away the guilt of ſins which we have

committed, but to prove that religion to have come from God, which arms us with conſiderations whereby we may guard againſt falling into them. In this ſenſe was he made an offering for ſin; he was made an offering in conſequence of the aſcendancy which moral diſorder had gained in the world, and which could in no other way be removed.

In Heb. ix. 26, we are given to underſtand that this expenſive ſacrifice was made at the very time in which it was certain of producing its proper good effects: and in verſe 28, that as he once appeared in a ſtate of ſuffering in order to overturn the dominion of ſin, he will next make his appearance as the glorified head of thoſe who, by faith in his doctrine, have purified themſelves from its pollutions.

Heb. x. 10. "We are ſanctified through the "offering of the body of Jeſus Chriſt."

We are made holy, we are reſcued from our ſinful practices, by the motives we derive from our faith in the doctrine which was confirmed by the event here referred to. There are ſeveral paſſages beſides in this Epiſtle of the like import with thoſe which I have inſerted, and which admit of ſimilar explication. The good effects which are repreſented in Scripture as flowing from the death of Chriſt,

Chriſt, ſhould in ſtrict propriety have been ſtated as following from the conſequences of that important event, and other circumſtances that attended it, ſuch as the reſurrection, and the confirmation of his doctrine. How the death of Chriſt can expiate guilt, or his blood waſh away the ſtains of ſin, in any other way than by giving validity to truths which may influence us as rational beings to lament our paſt tranſgreſſions, and to form fixed reſolutions to practiſe righteouſneſs, I am wholly unable to comprehend. This repreſentation ſets a rational conſtruction on the language of the ſacred writers, nor is it forced or unnatural if we duly conſider all circumſtances. The death of Chriſt was matter of offence to both Jews and gentiles; it was natural for the Apoſtles then to bring it forward under thoſe figures which introduced images that were naturally, or from habit and cuſtom, agreeable and familiar to them. Hence writing to Jews and Gentiles, who were equally given to hold in veneration ſacrifices and burnt-offerings, they repreſented the death of Chriſt as a ſacrifice and an offering. It would be natural for them to point out any analogy between the circumſtances which attended it, and uſages connected with thoſe rites. This was peculiarly the caſe with the writer of the Epiſtle to the Hebrews. The diſpoſition to allegorize manifeſted in this book, inclines me to believe, that it was written after the times of the

Apoſtles. I do not make this obſervation becauſe I ſuſpect that it contains any thing in favour of the modern doctrine of the atonement, ſince no traces of that notion can be diſcovered till ſome centuries after the time in which this work is known to have held its place among the canonical Scriptures.

As a key to interpret all the texts quoted to prove that the obedience, ſufferings and death of Chriſt, juſtify us before God, or diſpoſe him to put up with our obedience, or to beſtow upon us ſome things beyond what his mercy would naturally incline him to do, I requeſt you to bear in mind that the doctrines which he taught us, the promiſes which he has confirmed to us, the hopes with which he has inſpired us, and the precepts which he has laid down to direct our conduct, owe their influence and authority to the evidence of his divine miſſion, which his death and reſurrection afford; and that the diſpoſitions which theſe promiſes, precepts, and hopes, create in our minds, and the ſanctity to which they give riſe in our conduct, diſpoſe the Almighty to pardon our ſins, and to admit us to ſhare in his favour. Theſe diſpoſitions and this ſanctity are the proximate or the more immediate cauſes of our juſtification, while the ſufferings, death, and reſurrection of Chriſt are the more remote ones.

The

The notions commonly entertained reſpecting the death of Chriſt, or thoſe which are included under the term *atonement* in the modern ſenſe put upon it, are certainly the moſt grievous of the corruptions of Chriſtianity.* By diveſting the Deity of

* The orthodox, as they are vulgarly called, ſuppoſe that ſin is an infinite evil, and that, in order to procure the pardon of it, infinite ſatisfaction muſt be given to GOD the Father, the firſt perſon in the Trinity; that to accompliſh this, it was neceſſary that a perſon who was GOD, ſuch as they ſuppoſe Chriſt to be, to die, that the guilt of the ſinner might be transferred to him. Of the ſupporters of this ſcheme, I would beg anſwers to the following queſtions:

Why had not GOD the Son, the ſecond perſon in the Trinity, the ſame right to require GOD the Father, the firſt perſon in the Trinity, to take upon him human nature, to ſuffer and die, as the Father had to require the Son to do the ſame, to give him ſatisfaction? Were not the government and juſtice of the Son as much inſulted by human tranſgreſſion as were thoſe of the Father? If, as they ſay, ſin, becauſe committed againſt a being of infinite goodneſs, be an infinite evil; why is not a good action, which reſpects ſuch a being, infinitely good? If GOD be unchangeable and impaſſible, how can he ſuffer and die? Allowing that Deity was united to human nature in the perſon of Chriſt, do not unions admit of different degrees of intimacy? What proofs have we that the union in this caſe was ſuch, that what may be predicated of the GOD might be predicated of the man? Alſo on what principles do they explain the transfers of guilt and merit that are ſuppoſed in their ſcheme? Is it poſſible that a virtuous perſon ſhould feel compunction and remorſe for the wicked actions of another; or that a vicious man ſhould experience the delights and pleaſures which belong to the pure in heart? Nothing more injurious to good morals has ever gained ground, than the ſuppoſition of ſuch transfers. Men leſs ſtrict in their conduct have attempted in all ages to reaſon themſelves into a belief of them; but I ſuſpect that they have never been able completely

of his natural placability, they repreſent him as a tyrant; and by pointing out other grounds of acceptance than repentance, and amendment of life, they open a wide door for vice and immorality. That there are excellent men who hold theſe notions, who have a high love and reverence for God, and who are exemplarily virtuous, makes nothing in favour of the notions, but only proves that the temper and practice of ſuch perſons are better than their principles; that while they profeſs belief in certain injurious ſpeculations, they govern their conduct by unperverted good ſenſe, and the precepts of the Goſpel. Had right views as firm hold of their minds as their preſent erroneous ones, we may be aſſured that they would have been ſtill more excellent, pious, and virtuous. In eſtimating the pains that ſhould be taken, and the zeal which ſhould be diſcovered, in eradicating error, we ſhould not merely conſider the inſtances in which it is held without being prejudicial to the perſon who holds it, but alſo thoſe in which its baneful effects appear, and alſo how much happier and better, *cæteris paribus*, men muſt be when actuated by right prin-

pletely to delude themſelves. They have had, lurking in their minds, a ſecret ſuſpicion that the remedy on which they relied would prove ineffectual; that nothing can adminiſter peace and ſecurity to the violator of virtue. It is this ſuſpicion that prevents the injurious conſequences which would otherwiſe flow from the doctrine of the atonement, as it is commonly underſtood.

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ciples, than when governed by falſe ones, eſpecially in concerns of importance. Before errors are diſcovered, providence may contrive checks by which their evil influence may in a great degree be defeated; but when once they are ſhewn to be ſuch, theſe checks may be withdrawn. In whatever light we conſider things, there cannot be any employment more worthy of a liberal enlightened mind, than that of extending the empire of truth. The peace and ſecurity of ſociety, the dignity and permanent happineſs of the individual, muſt ever bear exact proportion to the degree in which it is known.

CHAP. III.

OF THE RESURRECTION, AS THE SOLE GROUND OF A CHRISTIAN'S HOPE OF A FUTURE LIFE.

FROM the light of nature we do not derive any ſatisfactory information on the ſubject of a future life. Whatever the probabilities that favour the expectation of it may be, they are done away by the difficulty of conceiving how it may be brought about. To me it appears that the ground-work on which the belief of a future ſtate was founded among the nations of antiquity, was ignorance of nature.

nature. This ignorance led them, wherever they diſcovered powers and properties of which they could not aſſign the cauſes, to aſcribe them to the operation of inviſible intelligent agents. Thus not knowing the nature of certain diſeaſes, they thought maniacs were poſſeſſed by dæmons. The planets, owing to their loco-motion, were ſuppoſed to be endowed with ſouls; ſtorms and earthquakes were imagined to be brought about by ſome of the gods. In exact conformity to this mode of reſolving phyſical appearances, the thinking powers of man were ſuppoſed to be owing to the preſence of an ætherial inhabitant, a kind of divinity which animated the corporeal frame, and which was not merely the ſeat of reaſon and of the affections, but alſo the principle of life and warmth. They allowed animals to poſſeſs ſouls. It was conſiſtent in them to aſcribe like qualities to like cauſes; and it is probable that had the œconomy of nature, with regard to the propagation and growth of vegetables, been as well known to them as it is to the moderns, they would have given them ſouls too.

This is always the courſe in the infant ſtate of knowledge. Men, as they begin to take in information, have not patience to unlooſe, they therefore cut the knots of ſcience by which they are obſtructed; i. e. inſtead of examining coolly and warily

warily every part and circumſtance concerned in any natural appearance, they ſit down and ſet their imaginations to work, to fabricate a cauſe, adequate to the production of the effects which they wiſh to explain, and thus make the creature of their fancies the agent in the operations of nature. The wild tenets which formed all the ſyſtems of ancient philoſophy had their origin in this kind of preſumption.

Thoſe whoſe minds have been formed by the ſtudy of the philoſophy which reigns in our age, would never infer the exiſtence of a ſoul, in the common acceptation of the term. Before they will allow an immaterial principle to be introduced, they muſt be ſatisfied that they know all the properties belonging to material ſubſtances in all the varieties of their combinations, and that theſe properties are abſolutely incompatible with thought and perception. They will require to be ſhewn, how ſubſtances, ſo oppoſite in their qualities as material and immaterial, can act upon each other. Matter acts upon matter by attraction; but if the ſoul be immaterial, and of courſe not ſubject to be attracted or repelled, how can this ſubſtance and the body be made to act upon each other? They will alſo beg to be informed, why an immaterial ſubſtance ſhould be poſſeſſed of the power of think-

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ing any more than a material one? How can we be certain that God is not able to endow matter with thought? Beſides, if it be ſomething immaterial in us that thinks, how is it that the powers of the mind keep the ſame pace in maturing, with thoſe of the body. Theſe are at firſt, like the latter, extremely weak; they gradually get ſtronger and ſtronger, till the ſtrength of the body reaches its utmoſt limit. Again, why is the feebleneſs into which the body ſinks in conſequence of age, uniformly attended by a correſpondent debility of mind. It may be farther aſked, of what uſe is all this curious mechaniſm of ſuch a variety of ſubſtances as enter into the compoſition of the human body, of their different degrees of conſiſtency, of their various temperatures and ſenſibilities, if it be maintained that an immaterial principle performs all the mental functions?

We conclude the eye to be the organ by which we ſee, becauſe, when it is any way prevented from exerciſing its functions, the power of ſeeing is in proportion taken away. And why will it not be allowed that the brain is the organ of thinking, ſince we ſuffer in the power of thinking when the brain is damaged?*

* Many perſons ſeem to think that, when we are once ſettled in the notion of materialiſm, every enquiry reſpecting the mind is at

On the principles of fair reaſoning we ſhall never arrive to the concluſion of an immaterial ſoul entering into moſt intimate union with a material body.

at an end, and the whole buſineſs ſettled. This is however a great miſtake, for materialiſm only induces us to regard the moſt important of all natural appearances, not as produced by an imaginary entity, by ſomething immaterial and unextended, that is, by what, with reſpect to our conceptions, is nothing, but as reſulting from extended ſubſtances, ſubject to the laws of attraction and repulſion, like the agents in all the other phenomena that come within the range of human obſervation, but poſſeſſed of ſundry properties not yet diſcovered. This view of the mental faculties affords the ſtrongeſt incentives to the cultivation of natural knowledge, as having a tendency to throw light on this moſt important, but hitherto little explored ſubject. The labours of phyſiologiſts, electricians, and chemiſts, may be of infinite ſervice in this way. The materialiſt has ſhewn that the hypotheſis of an immaterial principle may be introduced with equal propriety to account for the ſenſation of the brute, the growth of the vegetable, and the cryſtallization of the foſſil, as for the faculty of reflection in man. He has directed us to inveſtigate the properties of matter, in order to ſolve the phenomena of mind. He has ridden our diſquiſitions of the puerile theories, contradictory hypotheſes, and unmeaning terms of ſchoolmen and ſcholaſtick divines. For all this he deſerves praiſe. But what does it amount to? It is an expoſure of error, rather than a diſcovery of truth; it is pointing out the road, which is different from advancing along it and exploring it. Here then is a field for exertion. Materialiſts and Unitarians have frequently been blamed for a degree of confidence unbecoming the lot of humanity; but if it is conſidered on what grounds this confidence is exerciſed, the cenſure will in general appear to have been little deſerved. Our confidence rather refers to the abſurdity of the errors which we have exploded, than to the certain rectitude of our own conceptions, to evident perverſions and groſs miſrepreſentations, rather than to any infallible explanations of our own.

Nor

Nor is this notion held forth in the Scriptures. Theſe reſolve the wonders of the human frame not to any ſubtil ætherial reſident in the human body, but aſcribe all its powers and functions to its curious ſtructure, and hence take occaſion to extol the divine wiſdom, as in Pſ. cxxxix. 14, 15. "I will praiſe thee, for I am fearfully and "wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; "and that my ſoul knoweth right well. My ſub-"ſtance was not hid from thee when I was made "in ſecret, and curiouſly wrought in the loweſt "parts of the earth."

The Scriptures give us no information of any part of man ſurviving death. They repreſent death, on the contrary, as a ſtate of ſleep; as a negation of all life, thought, or action; as reſt, a reſting place, or home; as a place of ſilence, of oblivion, of darkneſs, of deſtruction and corruption. Moſes, David, Solomon, &c. are ſaid to have ſlept with their fathers.

1. Death is repreſented as a ſtate of ſleep. See Job xiv. 11, 12. "As the waters fail from the ſea, "and the flood decayeth and drieth up; ſo man "lieth down and riſeth not, till the heavens be no "more; they ſhall not awake nor be raiſed out of "their ſleep." Pſ. xiii. 3. "Lighten my eyes, leſt "I ſleep the ſleep of death." 1 Cor. v. 6. "He

"was

" was ſeen of above five hundred brethren at once:
" of whom the greater part remain, but ſome are
" fallen aſleep." Ver. 18. " Then they alſo which
" are fallen aſleep in Chriſt are periſhed." 1 Theſſ.
iv. 14. " Them which ſleep in Jeſus will GOD bring
" with him." Dan. xii. 2. " And many of them
" that ſleep in the duſt of the earth ſhall awake,
" ſome to everlaſting life."

2. Death is repreſented by a negation of all life, thought, or action.

See Job iii. 11. " Why died I not from the womb,
" then ſhould I have lien ſtill?" xiv. 10. " Man
" dieth, and where is he?" Pſ. vi. 5. " In death
" there is no remembrance of thee." Pſ. xxx. 9.
" Shall the duſt praiſe thee?" cxv. 17. " The dead
" praiſe not the LORD, neither any that go down
" into ſilence." cxlvi. 4. " His breath goeth down,
" he returneth to his earth: in that very day his
" thoughts periſh." Eccl. ix. 5. " The dead know
" not any thing." ver. 10. " There is no work,
" nor device, nor knowledge, nor wiſdom, whither
" thou goeſt." Acts ii. 34. " David is not aſcended
" into the heavens."

3. Death is repreſented as a reſt, and the grave a reſting-place, houſe, or home.

See Job iii. 17. "There the weary are at reſt." Eccl. xii. 5. "Goeth to his long home." xiv. 13. "They reſt from their labours."

4. Death is repreſented as a ſtate of ſilence.

See 1 Sam. ii. 9. "He will keep the feet of his "ſaints, and the wicked ſhall be ſilent in darkneſs."

5. Of oblivion.

See Pſalm lxxxviii. 10, 11, 12.

6. Of darkneſs.

See Pſ. x. 21. "Before I go to the land of dark-"neſs and the ſhadow of death.

7. Of corruption and deſtruction.

See Job iv. 18, 19, 20. "He put no truſt in his "ſervants, how much leſs in them that dwell in "houſes of clay, whoſe foundation is in the duſt, "which are cruſhed before the moth! They are "deſtroyed from morning to evening, they are pe-"riſhed for ever." Pſ. xlix. "He [his ſoul, in the "original] ſhall go to the generation of his fathers; "they ſhall never ſee light."

Though

Though it be clearly the doctrine of the Scriptures, that man at death becomes altogether inſenſible and inactive, yet are we aſſured, on the ſame authority, that we ſhall riſe again to life everlaſting.

The Scriptures inform us that we ſhall not live again untill the period of the general reſurrection, when Chriſt ſhall come to judge the world. It is not until that time, called alſo "the end of the "world;" "the day of Chriſt;" "the day of the "Lord;" that the wicked ſball be ſevered from the righteous. Until then Chriſtians are ſaid to be in a ſtate of probation.

1. That we ſhall not live again until the reſurrection.

See Pſ. xvii. 15. "I ſhall be ſatisfied when I a-"wake in thy likeneſs." John vi. 39. "This is "the Father's will, that of all which he has given "me I ſhould loſe nothing, but ſhould raiſe it up "again on the laſt day." xi. 25, 26. "Jeſus ſaith "unto her, I am the reſurrection and the life; he "that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet "ſhall he live; and whoſoever liveth and believeth "in me, ſhall never die." 1. Theſs. iv. 15. "This "we ſay unto you by the word of the LORD, that "we which are alive and remain unto the coming "of the LORD, ſhall not prevent them which are "aſleep."

" aſleep." 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52. " We ſhall not all " ſleep, but we ſhall all be changed in a moment, " in the twinkling of an eye, at the laſt trump." Rom. iv. 17. " He believed God who quickeneth " the dead, and calleth thoſe things which be not " as though they were."

2. It is not until the ſame period, the period of the reſurrection, (to expreſs which we find different terms made uſe of) that the wicked ſhall be ſevered from the righteous.

See Matth. xiii. 30. " Let both grow together " until the harveſt; and in the time of harveſt I will " ſay to the reapers, gather ye firſt the tares and " bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather " the wheat into my barn." Ver. 40. " As the " tares are gathered, and burnt in the fire; ſo ſhall " it be in the end of this world." Ver. 49. " And " ſever the wicked from among the juſt." xxiv. 31. " He ſhall ſend his angels with a great ſound " of a trumpet, and they ſhall gather together his " elect from the four winds, from one end of hea- " ven to the other." xxv. 31. " When the Son of " Man ſhall come in his glory, before him ſhall be " gathered all nations; and he ſhall ſeparate them " one from another, as a ſhepherd divideth his " ſheep from the goats."

3. Until

3. Until the reſurrection we are ſaid to be upon trial, or in a ſtate of probation.

See Phil. i. 10. "That ye may be ſincere and "without offence till the day of Chriſt." 1 Theſſ. v. 23. "I pray God your whole ſpirit, ſoul, and "body, be preſerved blameleſs unto the coming of "our Lord Jeſus Chriſt." 1 Tim. vi. 14. "That "thou keep this commandment without ſpot, un-"rebukeable, until the appearance of our Lord "Jeſus Chriſt." Ja. i. 7. "Be patient therefore, "brethren, unto the coming of the Lord." 2 Pet. iii. 11, 12. "Looking for and haſtening unto the "coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens "being on fire ſhall be diſſolved, and the elements "ſhall melt with fervent heat." ver. 14. "Where-"fore, beloved, ſeeing that ye look for ſuch things, "be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, "without ſpot and blameleſs."*

4. Our Chriſtian courſe, and improvements in piety in this world, terminate in the reſurrection.

Phil. i. 6. "Being confident of this very thing, "that he which hath begun a good work in you, "will perform it until the day of Chriſt."

* It is highly worthy of notice, that in Scripture we are never exhorted to prepare for *death*, but always for the *coming of our Lord*, &c. See Taylor on the Romans; p. 447. Dub. ed.

5. The elect ſhall not be gathered together until the reſurrection.

See Matt. xxiv. 31.

6. The world ſhall not be judged before the reſurrection.

See Acts xvii. 31. "He hath appointed a day in "which he will judge the world, by that man whom "he hath ordained." Rom. ii. 16. "In the day "in which God ſhall judge the ſecrets of men by "Jeſus Chriſt." 2 Tim. iv. 1. "The Lord Jeſus "Chriſt, who ſhall judge the quick and dead at his "appearing."

7. The virtuous ſhall not be rewarded until the reſurrection.

See Matth. xiii. 43. "Then ſhall the righteous "ſhine forth as the ſun in the kingdom of their "father." Luke xiv. 14. "Thou ſhalt be recom-"penſed at the reſurrection of the juſt." John vi. 44. "No man can come unto me, except the "Father draw him: and I will raiſe him up at the "laſt day." 2 Cor. i. 14. "We are your rejoi-"cing, even as ye are alſo ours, in the day of our "Lord Jeſus."

8. They

8. They ſhall not have eternal life, or ſalvation, &c. until the reſurrection.

John vi. 54. "In my father's houſe are many "manſions. I go to prepare a place for you; I will "come again and receive you to myſelf, that where "I am, ye may be alſo." Col. iii. 4. "When "Chriſt who is our life ſhall appear, then ſhall ye "alſo appear with him in glory." 1 Pet. iv. 5. "When the chief ſhepherd ſhall appear, ye ſhall "receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

9. They, their faith, labour, and ſufferings, are ſaid to be loſt, periſhed, and to be unprofitable, if there be no reſurrection.

See 1 Cor. xv. 18. "Then (i. e. if Chriſt be not "raiſed) they alſo which are fallen aſleep in Chriſt "are periſhed." Ver. 32. "If after the manner of "men I have fought with beaſts at Epheſus; what "advantageth it me, if the dead riſe not." Ver. 58. "Therefore, my brethren, be ye ſtedfaſt, unmove-"able, always abounding in the work of the Lord, "foraſmuch as ye know that your labour is not in "vain in the Lord."

10. The reſurrection is repreſented as the grand object of our faith, hope, and comfort.

See Acts xxiii. 6. "Paul cried out, for the hope "and reſurrection of the dead, I am called in queſ- "tion." 2 Cor. iv. 14. "Knowing that he who "raiſed up the Lord Jeſus, ſhall raiſe up us alſo "by Jeſus." 1 Theſſ. iv. 17, 18. "Then we which "are alive and remain, ſhall be caught up together "with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the "air, and ſo ſhall we ever be with the Lord. There- "fore comfort one another with theſe words." 1 Pet. i. 3—5. "Bleſſed be the God and Father "of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, which according to his "abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a "lively hope by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt "from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and "undefiled, that fadeth not away, reſerved in heaven "for you, who are kept by the power of God thro' "faith unto ſalvation, ready to be revealed in the "laſt time."

11. The time of the reſurrection is the period mentioned when the wicked ſhall be puniſhed.

See Matth. vii. 22, 23. "Many will ſay to me "in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied "in thy name? And then will I profeſs unto them, "I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work "iniquity." xii. 36. "Every idle word that men "ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give an account thereof in "the day of judgment." Mark viii. 38. "Who-

"ever

" ever therefore ſhall be aſhamed of me, and of my " words; of him alſo ſhall the Son of Man be " aſhamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Fa- " ther, with the holy angels."

12. All this is abundantly ſufficient to ſhew that the Scriptures, when ſpeaking of our future life, do not take into the account the time which intervenes between our departure from this life, and our reſurrection to another; juſt as it is uſual, when we treat of the courſe of a man's life, to have no regard to the time he ſpends in ſleep.

13. For this reaſon the Scriptures repreſent the coming of Chriſt as near at hand.

See Rom. xiii. 12. " The night is far ſpent, the " day is at hand." Phil. iv. 5. " The Lord is at " hand." James v. 8. " The coming of the Lord " draweth nigh." Rev. xxii. 7. " Behold, I come " quickly." Ver. 9. " The judge ſtandeth before " the door." Ver. 12. " I come quickly; and my " reward is with me, to give every man according " as his work ſhall be." Ver. 20. " He which teſ- " tifieth theſe things ſaith, Surely I come quickly."

14. Alſo that he, his day, will come ſuddenly, as a man, a thief, upon all the world; and we are cau-

tioned to watch, and be ſober, that it ſurprize us not unprepared.

See Luke xii. 40. "Be ye therefore ready alſo; "for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye "think not." 1 Theſſ. v. 2. "For yourſelves know "perfectly, that the day of the Lord ſo cometh as a "thief in the night." 2 Pet. iii. 10. "But the "day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." Ver. 12. "Looking for and haſting unto the "coming of the day of GOD." Rev. iii. 3. "If "therefore thou ſhalt not watch, I will come on "thee as a thief, and thou ſhalt not know what "hour I will come upon thee."

I would truſt that the poſitive proof which theſe paſſages afford is abundantly ſufficient to ſatisfy every impartial perſon, that from the time of our death till the reſurrection we are to remain inſenſible.

Before I produce the texts uſually alledged in oppoſition to the doctrine above ſtated, I muſt obſerve, that the words which we render ſoul and ſpirit in our tranſlation, never ſignify either an immaterial or highly refined material principle diſtinct from the body, and which ſurvives its diſſolution. Theſe ſignify either perſons, as in Gen. xvii. 14. "That ſoul ſhall be cut off;" or people, as in Acts ii. 41.

ii. 41. "The ſame day were added unto them "about three thouſand ſouls." Or man, as in Gen. xii. 13. "Say, I pray thee, thou art my ſiſter, and "my ſoul ſhall live becauſe of thee." Souls are ſaid to eat, as in Job xxxiii. 20. "So that his life ab- "horreth bread, and his ſoul dainty meat." Souls are ſaid to be ſmitten with the ſword; See Joſh. x. 23. To be killed; Ezek. xiii. 19. Theſe terms are ſometimes made to ſignify all living creatures; alſo the body alone, either living, dead, or buried. They refer in ſome places to the future life of man; they denote likewiſe the lower appetites, affections, and paſſions of the mind; in others its ſuperior faculties and operations, as the intellect, the judgment, the will and choice, courage, care, and concern, general temper, inclination, or diſpoſition. The ſame terms are uſed to denote the Holy Spirit and his gifts; alſo angels both good and evil.

Theſe things being premiſed, you will ſee that when it is ſaid, Gen. ii. 7. "Man became a living "ſoul;" no more is meant than that he received the principle of life. And when the Prophet, 1 Kings xvii. 21, 22, prays that the child's ſoul may come to him again, he ſimply means, that his life ſhould be reſtored to him. See 1 Sam. xxx. 12. "When "he had eaten, his ſpirit came to him again."

The

The ſtory of Saul and the Witch of Endor has been thought to furniſh a proof in favour of a ſeparate ſtate. The whole of this matter was beyond all doubt nothing more than the trick of a ſkilful necromancer to delude a ſuperſtitious prince. Will any one who believes, that immediately upon Samuel's dying he was admitted into the preſence of GOD, aſſert, that it was in the power of the witch of Endor, to command the ſoul of the prophet from the ſeats of the bleſſed, to ſerve her purpoſes?

Eccleſ. iii. 21. "Who knoweth the ſpirit of man "that goeth upward, and the ſpirit of the beaſt that "goeth downward?"

Who knoweth the ſpirit of man that goeth upward, or that ſoars above temporal things, and the ſpirit of the beaſt that goeth downward, that is low and groveling; that is, who knows the difference between theſe? We have in ver. 19, the anſwer by Solomon himſelf, "that which befalleth "the ſons of men, (he tells us,) befalleth beaſts; "even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, "ſo dieth the other; yea they have all one breath." And ver. 20. "All go into one place, all are of the "duſt, and all turn to duſt again." Therefore, when the ſame writer ſays, Eccleſ. xii. 7. "Then "ſhall the duſt return to the earth as it was, and "the

"the ſpirit ſhall return to God who gave it;" he muſt be underſtood to mean, that when the corporeal frame is diſſolved, the life which God had given, ceaſes to be. If he be ſuppoſed here to aſſert, that the ſoul when ſeparate from the body retains its conſciouſneſs, he muſt alſo be thought to contradict what he had ſaid before in Chap. iii. 19, 20; as alſo Chap. ix. 5. "The dead know not any "thing, neither have they any more reward." Ver. 10. "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wiſdom, in the grave."

Matth. x. 28. "Fear not them which kill the "body, but are not able to kill the ſoul: but rather "fear him, who is able to deſtroy both body and "ſoul in hell."

Our Saviour makes uſe of the vulgar language concerning ſoul and body, in order to convey his ideas more ſucceſsfully. His meaning evidently is, that they ſhould not ſo much fear them in whoſe hands their preſent life was; but rather to fear him who can kill both body and ſoul; that is, deprive of eternal life and happineſs. Obſerve, he does not *ſeparate them*, but ſpeaks of them together. He cannot be ſaid here to give any intimation reſpecting future rewards and puniſhments previouſly to the reſurrection, when the body ſhall be reanimated,

or

or endowed with the principle of life, or to adopt the vulgar language, when body and ſoul ſhall be united.

Matth. xvii. 3. "There appeared to him Moſes "and Elias, talking with him."

A viſion perhaps. Or they might appear in their glorified bodies; ſince it may be that Moſes was tranſlated as well as Elias.

Luke xvi. 19, &c. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus.

This is merely a deſcription of the future ſtate, and of the changes that will take place in the ſituations of different men conſequent upon an entrance into it, without any reference to the time or manner in which it ſhall be attained. The whole repreſentation ſeems adapted to the inconſiſtent notions of the vulgar. The two perſons here introduced are ſuppoſed to be at the ſame time in and out of the body; for in ver. 24, it is ſaid, "ſend Lazarus that "he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool "my tongue." It is perfectly analogous to the account of the diſcourſes, which men are feigned to have in the grave among worms. See Iſa. xiv. 9, 10, 11.

Luke

Luke xx. 38. "He is not the God of the dead, "but of the living."

He is not the God of ſuch as be finally dead; but being in covenant with them, they in effect live unto him. "He quickeneth the dead, and "calleth thoſe things which be not as though "they were."

Luke xxiii. 43. "To-day ſhalt thou be with me "in paradiſe."

To-day thou art certain of a place with me in heaven; it is a thing already done and determined; the words *to-day* being conſtantly uſed of any matter then fixed, ſettled, or declared, though not to commence till ſome months or ages after. See Gen. ii. 17. "In the day that thou eateſt thereof thou "ſhalt ſurely die." Deut. ix. 1. "Hear, O Iſrael, "thou art to paſs over Jordan this day." Alſo chap. xxix. 13. "That he may eſtabliſh thee to-"day for a people unto him." Pſal. ii. 7. "Thou "art my ſon, this day have I begotten thee." Alſo paradiſe may mean no more than the ſtate of the virtuous dead.

Acts vii. 59. "They ſtoned Stephen, calling upon "God, and ſaying, Lord Jeſus, receive my ſpirit," or, as it might be rendered, my life.

See Col. iii. 3. "With whom our life is hid with "Chriſt in God." If life, either paſt or future, can be ſaid to be hid with Chriſt; why may it not by the ſame figure be received by him, committed to, or depoſited with, and kept by him?

2 Cor. v. 8. "We are willing rather to be ab- "ſent from the body, and to be preſent with the "Lord."

An able writer obſerves on this text, 'We pre- 'fer the future life which commences at the reſur- 'rection, and in which alone we ſhall be with 'Chriſt, to the preſent, in which we are abſent "from him."

Phil. i. 21—24. "To me to live is Chriſt, and "to die is gain! yet what I ſhall chooſe I wot not: "for I am in a ſtrait betwixt two; having a deſire "to depart and to be with Chriſt, which is far bet- "ter. Nevertheleſs, to abide in the fleſh is more "needful for you."

"To me," the ſame writer obſerves, "to live, is "Chriſt," i. e. Chriſt will be glorified by my la- bours, and "to die is gain," as I ſhall then be delivered from a ſtate of perſecution and ſuffer- ing; but if I live in the fleſh, this is the fruit of 'my

my labour: "yet what I ſhall chooſe, I wot not; "for I am in a ſtrait betwixt two;" or, as it might be rendered, I am ſtraitened by two things, viz. the proſpect of life, or that of death. Neither of them are the objects of my choice, "having a "deſire to depart, and to be with Chriſt, which is "far better;" wiſhing, if it were poſſible, to be delivered at once from mortality, by the coming of Chriſt, and ſo be immediately with him. That this muſt be the ſenſe of the paſſage, is evident from hence; that being with Chriſt always refers to his ſecond coming at the reſurrection. "Ne- "verthelefs," the Apoſtle goes on to ſay, "to abide "in the fleſh is more needful for you;" that is, of two things which are not the objects of my deſire, viz. life or death, more good will accrue to you from the former, and therefore I prefer it. See Prieſtley's Inſtit. vol. ii. p. 401, 402.

1 Peter iii. 19. "By which alſo he went, and "preached unto the ſpirits in priſon."

Spirits here mean perſons, as in 1 Tim. iv. 1. "ſeducing ſpirits or perſons."

Heb. xii. 13. "To the ſpirits of juſt men made "perfect:" moſt probably perſons that had attained to the height of holineſs and virtue.

Rev.

Rev. vi. 9. 10. "When he had opened the fifth "ſeal, I ſaw on the altar the ſouls of them that "were ſlain for the word of GOD, and for the teſ- "timony which they held. And they cried with a "loud voice, ſaying, How long, O LORD, holy and "true, doſt thou not judge and avenge our blood "on them that dwell on the earth?"

An elegant rhetorical figure, where the lives of martyrs are repreſented as a ſacrifice, acceptable to GOD, which from the altar calls for vengeance. Thus the blood of Abel is ſaid to call for vengeance. A ſimilar figure is made uſe of in Pſ. xvi. 9.

There is no one of the original Chriſtian doctrines, againſt which perſons who have not attended to theſe matters, feel a greater prejudice than the doctrine which makes our future life ſolely to depend on our reſurrection from the graye.

Such perſons would do well to examine carefully the ſtate of their own minds. Whatever they may think, they are not in reality well affected to Chriſtianity, for they value more their own conceits than its moſt ſolemn aſſurances. If their notions of a ſoul are overthrown, their conduct proves that they will place no confidence in the power and faithfulneſs of GOD. If the ſoul be periſhable, theſe perſons

ſons tell us, they have no hope of a future life; notwithſtanding the Scriptures declare that God will again raiſe this body; that this "mortal ſhall put "on immortality, and this corruptible ſhall put on "incorruption." This ſcepticiſm, which numbers of Chriſtians are not aſhamed to avow, may be traced to a want of faith in the divine authority of the Scriptures, and a diſtruſt of the power of the Almighty; to a want of ſufficient acquaintance with the hiſtorical evidence of Chriſtianity, which is the immoveable rock on which the hope of the Chriſtian remains unſhaken, amid the fluctuation of human opinions.

The notion of our having no conſciouſneſs until the reſurrection, of our remaining inſenſible until that period, if men would but conſider the matter diſpaſſionately, would appear not only more rational, but far more pleaſing and deſireable. The reſurrection, we all know, is repreſented in Scripture as an event of the firſt conſequence, the greateſt ſtreſs is laid upon it. In proportion as the reſurrection is important to the future happineſs of Chriſtians, muſt the ſtate previouſly to this event be imperfect;* the conſtant expectation belonging to ſuch a ſtate will be a ſource of diſquietude, the ſoul muſt be

* We are accuſtomed to hear ſeparate ſpirits deſcribed as purified from all earthly droſs, unclogged by fleſh and blood, etherial beings

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uneaſy while ſeparate from its companion, and it will hardly be poſſible for it to be free from even painful ſenſations, when it reflects on the ſituation of its old aſſociate, that is rotting in the grave, the prey of worms.

To reſt in the grave in a ſtate of inſenſibility, to remain as it were aſleep, even though it ſhould be for a million of years, will be far preferable to ſuch a ſtate as that of ſeparate ſpirits muſt unavoidably be. The length of the time that we continue to be inſenſible, will be nothing with regard to us. Nor can any objection be grounded on the loſs of poſitive enjoyment, as the time of our inſenſibility, let it be ever ſo long, will bear no proportion to that of our conſcious exiſtence, which will commence at its expiration. Let the imagination lengthen out to any extent the period we are to continue inſenſible, the proportion it will bear to eternity will be infinitely leſs than that which a ſecond of time bears to the longeſt human life.

I have now endeavoured to lay before the reader the concluſions in reference to our future exiſtence,

like the angels of GOD. However this account may charm, it has no foundation in reaſon, nor ſupport from Scripture; it is abſolutely inconſiſtent with the great ſtreſs which is there laid upon the reſurrection. Indeed were this notion well founded, it would be difficult to conceive of any one good end which the reſurrection could anſwer.

which

which reaſon and the tenour of revelation appear decidedly to favour. My faith in the doctrine of the reſurrection, as the ſole ground of our hope of a life after this, as well as in the doctrines of the unity of God and his placability, or his diſpoſition to forgive penitent ſinners freely, I build on the general ſcope of Scripture, collecting the repreſentations of them that are to be met with in the Old Teſtament, and next examining thoſe which we have in the Goſpels and in the Acts of the Apoſtles. To thoſe notions of them which appear to be beſt ſupported by theſe, I give my full aſſent. Any expreſſions in the Epiſtles which may ſeem not to accord with them I regard as difficulties, which time and farther reſearches into theſe writings will remove. From laying too great ſtreſs on ſome expreſſions that occur in theſe, it is well known that plauſible things have been produced in favour of a variety of popiſh abſurdities, which all good proteſtants reject.

I ſhall adhere to this rule, and exhort others to adopt it, until I am ſatisfied on the following points: How far the Apoſtles, in writing to particular ſocieties, might adopt the language beſt underſtood in thoſe ſocieties: how far they might think it right to connive at errors in leſſer matters: how far they might uſe arguments likely to have weight with thoſe whom they addreſſed, but which conſidered in themſelves were of no force: and how far we can

be certain that at this diſtance of time, we underſtand every phraſe that may be obſcured by alluſions to local circumſtances, temporary incidents, and opinions then current, but ſince fallen into oblivion. I have no doubt, however, that when theſe difficulties are obviated, the Epiſtles will be found to accord in every tittle with the plain ſimple doctrines which are held forth in the hiſtorical parts of the New Teſtament.

We may now ſee the difference of conduct to which it is owing that ſome men after enquiry ſit down rational Chriſtians, while others are confirmed in their belief of corrupt human ſyſtems of faith. The former make out their creed from the Old Teſtament, in connection with the Goſpels and the Acts of the Apoſtles; they conſult the tenour of Scripture, diſregard detached paſſages, until illuſtrated by conſidering the connection and the deſign of the writer. The latter are determined chiefly by the ſound of certain ſeparate quotations. The former go upon ſure ground, they follow a certain rule. The latter, not proceeding in any methodical way, can never arrive at certainty. On the one ſide we ſee clear reaſoning, intelligible arguments, and obvious deductions; on the other, mere authorities, mere prejudices, forced inferences, and contradictory poſitions.

PART III.

Of the origin and riſe of thoſe Corruptions which prevailed in the Chriſtian Church in oppoſition to the Doctrines ſtated in the preceding Chapter.

It may be natural for the reader now to aſk, If the Divine Unity, if the Placability of God, and the Reſurrection as the ſole foundation of a life after this, be the primitive Chriſtian doctrines, how came men ſo univerſally to deviate from the belief of them? How came they to embrace notions ſo oppoſite to them, as are thoſe of the Trinity, of the Vicarious Sacrifice of Chriſt, and of the ſeparate Exiſtence of the Soul in a conſcious ſtate after the diſſolution of the body? I ſhall attempt very briefly to reſolve theſe queries.

CHAP. I.

HOW CHRIST CAME TO BE CONSIDERED AS GOD ALMIGHTY, AND THE NOTION OF A TRINITY TO BE FORMED.

THE account given of Chriſt by Peter, Acts ii. 21, "as a man approved of God by miracles, "and wonders, and ſigns, which God did by him

"in the midſt of them," formed the faith of Chriſtians in the days of the Apoſtles; and the Jewiſh converts continued in this perſuaſion until their extinction as a ſeparate body.

Among the gentile converts, there were ſome who had come over from the ſeveral ſects of philoſophers which then prevailed. Theſe perſons, while they found themſelves unable to reſiſt the evidences of Chriſtianity, and to withhold their aſſent from its doctrines, did at the ſame time retain a predilection for the tenets of the ſchools to which they had reſpectively belonged. They ſtudied to trace a reſemblance between the Chriſtian doctrines and theſe. It was alſo natural for them to feel a wiſh to exalt the character of the founder of their religion; they did not ſo well reliſh being the diſciples of one who paſſed for a crucified malefactor. In theſe two circumſtances we may diſcover the origin of the error we are now conſidering. The firſt ſtep which the corruptors of the Chriſtian doctrines took, was to repreſent the divine wiſdom and power, which had been imparted to Jeſus in order to accompliſh the purpoſes of his miſſion, as a ſort of indwelling of the divinity, as a kind of union with GOD, which raiſed him to the rank of a God, and made him an object of religious worſhip; but all this while they had no idea of his being

being equal to the Supreme JEHOVAH. They carefully diſtinguiſh him from the one true GOD, whoſe ſervant they ſtate him to be. This is acknowledged by men of different perſuaſions who are learned in theſe matters.

The Platonizing fathers, as they are called, or thoſe who, from being followers of Plato, became Chriſtians, adapted the tenets of their new profeſſion to certain refinements and diſtinctions in the divine nature made by their maſter, and others of his ſchool. Though Plato himſelf was an Unitarian, yet he had expreſſed himſelf looſely, and by this had given occaſion to a ſecond principle to be ſet up by his followers, which was wiſdom or reaſon. Theſe philoſophizing Chriſtians maintained that this ſecond principle had permanently attached itſelf to Jeſus. Their ſpeculations on the generation of the wiſdom, reaſon, or word, led to the conſubſtantiality and coequality of Chriſt with the Father, which were ratified at the council of Nice, A. D. 325. It was not however till a conſiderable time after this, that the coequality of the Holy Ghoſt was fully eſtabliſhed.

It is evident that the Deification of Chriſt took its riſe in part alſo from the pride of his followers, ſince it is known that they applied the newly-invented tenets

tenets of his divinity and pre-exiſtence, to wipe off the diſgrace which they apprehended would accrue to them, if their leader could be made to be nothing more than a man who had ſuffered an ignominious death, who had lived but lately, who was of low origin, and mean external appearance. While this ſort of ſhame led thoſe who are now looked upon as the orthodox fathers of the church to regard Chriſt as a ſuperangelic Being or God, the ſame principle induced others to maintain that he was a man only in appearance and not in reality, that he never ſuffered, but merely appeared to ſuffer, in conſequence of deluſion impoſed on the ſenſes of the ſpectators.

The orthodox, or as they ſhould be called, the pſeudo-orthodox fathers of the third and fourth century, have attempted to account for the ſilence of the Apoſtles about the divinity of Chriſt, by aſcribing it to mere motives of policy, to their apprehenſions that it would hinder the ſucceſs of their miniſtry. This poor apology only deſerves to be noted, as it contains an acknowledgment of the fact that the Apoſtles did not preach the doctrine of the Trinity. Paul, however, aſſerts, that he "had not ſhunned to declare the whole council of "God." And it does not appear that any of them were men who would ſacrifice truth to prudential conſiderations.

conſiderations. This fact reſpecting the Apoſtles, allowed by theſe fathers, proves that the texts which are now thought to ſupport the doctrine of the Trinity, were not then corrupted as they have been ſince, and that others were underſtood by men whoſe native language was that in which theſe paſſages were written, and who lived ſo near the time of the writers, in a ſenſe different from what ſome are inclined to put upon them at this day. Theſe fathers aſſert, that none of the Apoſtles except John taught the Trinity, but his writings are without difficulty reconciled to thoſe of the other Apoſtles, regard being had to the peculiar turn of his phraſeology.

All this while the great bulk of the common people were Unitarians. In the time of Juſtin Martyr and Tertullian, *the many, the greater number of the faithful*, were of this deſcription. The zeal of the Platonizing fathers have prevented the valuable writings of their learned men from reaching us. They have, however, tranſmitted to us their ſentiments, and we learn from them that theſe ancient Unitarians aſſerted that they had derived their opinions from the Apoſtles, and that they regarded themſelves as their true ſucceſſors and deſcendants.

Aquila,

Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, tranſlated the Hebrew bible into Greek; Lucianus, well-known for his great ſervices to the ſacred text, and Artemas and Theodorus, diſtinguiſhed by their great learning, were Unitarians, and lived prior to the orthodox fathers, whoſe writings have reached us. There is good ground to conclude that the learned Hegeſippus was an Unitarian.

I cannot diſmiſs this article, without obſerving, that when once the Chriſtians in imitation of the heathens commenced the occupation of deifying, they did not very readily lay it aſide. Having raiſed to equal honours with the Father, his appointed meſſenger of ſalvation to an idolatrous world, and alſo that energy by which thoſe to whom it was imparted were able to work miracles, they in the next place deified Mary the mother of Chriſt; and converted into objects of religious adoration a whole hoſt of ſaints; and at length the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper after conſecration.

Thus Chriſtianity began to have all the appearance of paganiſm. Its genuine doctrines ſeemed to have been wholly loſt amidſt the ſubtilties of the gentile philoſophy, and the rites of the heathen worſhip.

For

For what end was it that God did ſuffer the truths of our holy religion to be thus obſcured? Was it with a view to give us of theſe later times, an opportunity of ſhewing our attachment to the Chriſtian cauſe, by manifeſting zeal for its purity, in oppoſition to the inconveniences to which ſuch a zeal may expoſe us?

CHAP. II.

OF THE ORIGIN AND RISE OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT.

THE modern tenet that Chriſt ſuffered in our ſtead, that our guilt and demerits were transferred to him, and that his obedience, death, and ſufferings, did them away, was unknown to Chriſtian antiquity. Nothing is more evident than that the fathers of the Chriſtian church were for ſome centuries entirely ignorant of this doctrine. In the apologies which they publiſhed, in which were contained ſummaries of the Chriſtian doctrine, not a ſingle intimation of ſuch a notion is to be found.

Even before the time of Origen we find the evangelical truths, that piety and purity of heart and

and life were the ſole terms of acceptance with God, to have been violated. Very undue merit had been affixed to the ſervices of baptiſm and the euchariſt, and above all to martyrdom; yet it does not appear that they had fallen into any errors about the death of Chriſt. They ſeem to have no notion of its being in any ſenſe expiatory. They clearly and unequivocally acknowledged the efficacy of repentance and obedience. I ſhall here ſubjoin a paſſage from one of them, as a ſpecimen of their ſentiments on this ſubject: 'Let no one when he 'has been led into ſin by the impulſe of paſſion de- 'ſpair of himſelf, for he may be reſtored if he re- 'pent of his ſins, and by good works make *ſatisfac- 'tion* to God: for if we think our children to be 'corrected when they repent of their faults, why 'ſhould we deſpair of the clemency of God being 'pacified by repentance?' Lactant. Inſt. lib. vi. cap. 24. p. 631. Again, the ſame writer ſays, 'Whoever therefore obeys the divine precepts, is 'a worſhipper of the true God, whoſe *ſacrifices* are 'gentleneſs of mind, an innocent life, and good 'works.'

There were heretics, it is well known, in thoſe days, who denied that our Saviour had a body. The fathers, when confuting this abſurd conceit, never once mention the neceſſity of Chriſt's having a body

a body in order to expiate the ſins of men. The end of the death of Chriſt they declare to be, to exhibit an example to his followers, to confirm his doctrines, and to afford in his own perſon a proof of the general reſurrection.

The famous Origen, interpreting literally the paſſage wherein Chriſt is ſaid "to have given himſelf a ranſom for us," was led to hold ſomething that reſembles the doctrine of the atonement. This father believed that the blood of Chriſt was the price of our redemption, but this price he ſuppoſed was paid to the devil, and not to divine juſtice, as was afterwards held. Nothing that bears any great likeneſs to the preſent doctrine, was ſtarted till towards the eighth or ninth century, and, ſingular as it may appear, it was not ſettled in the manner in which it is now held till the reformation; and we ſhall find the opinions even then held concerning it very materially to differ from thoſe which are at preſent entertained.

The merit of good works was held by the Roman church. On this doctrine the members of that communion founded the doctrines of works, of ſupererogation, of purgatory, and of indulgencies. And as the controverſy between Luther and the ſee of Rome, at firſt turned upon the ſubject of indulgencies,

gencies, he, the more effectually to overthrow this practice, denied altogether the merit of good works, and placed our hopes of eternal happineſs on the perfect ſatisfaction made by Chriſt to divine juſtice, and the imputation of his righteouſneſs to us. The principles of Auſtin were favourable to this doctrine, and Luther was of an order of monks called after this father's name. Calvin held the ſame opinion on this ſubject. This celebrated reformer aſſerts, that Chriſt's death would not have been expiatory if he had been killed by robbers, and not in conſequence of a ſentence of a court of juſtice with guilt laid to his charge. He alſo maintained that Chriſt deſcended into hell, and there ſuffered the puniſhments of the damned, and there it was, he ſtates, that he atoned for the ſins of men. Without this, he ſays, nothing would have been done by his mere death. Theſe notions differ widely, I apprehend, from thoſe that prevail in the preſent day, and muſt, I believe, ſhock many perſons who are the profeſſed followers of the reformer of Geneva.

Thus is this doctrine, on which ſo much ſtreſs has been laid, which is ſo injurious to virtue, and which tarniſhes the luſtre of the divine character, a thing of modern date. At the Reformation, when many errors were overthrown, it was the fate of this to receive freſh ſtrength and more extenſive prevalence.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

OF THE SOUL SURVIVING THE BODY IN A STATE OF ACTIVITY AND ENJOYMENT.

THE firſt Chriſtians ſeem to have had no idea of a conſcious ſtate intervening between death and the reſurrection. It being the doctrine of the ſcriptures, that at death there is an end of ſenſe and conſciouſneſs, and that future life commences not until the reſurrection, we muſt preſume that this formed the belief of the flock of Chriſt for ſome time after the days of the Apoſtles.

This would appear evident from the following, if from no other circumſtance, that of the firſt Chriſtians looking with ſo much impatience to the ſecond coming of Chriſt. We find both Peter and Paul remonſtrating with them upon this matter. We have nothing in our days that borders on this conduct, for the reaſon that an intermediate ſtate of perfect happineſs between death and the reſurrection, is generally believed among us. Had the ſame tenet been received among the diſciples in the times of the Apoſtles, they would have diſcovered no impatience for the general judgment to take place, nor would ſo much ſtreſs have been laid by the ſacred writers on the reſurrection.

None

None of the fathers believed in a ſoul, taken in a ſenſe any thing like that now given the term, until the ſixth century. Every ancient doctor, it is obſerved, ſtates his ſentiments concerning it conformably to the tenets of that ſect of philoſophers to which he had belonged previouſly to his converſion. Some maintained, with Plato, that ſouls had pre-exiſted, and that their union with the body was a puniſhment inflicted upon them in conſequence of a ſecret deſire indulged by them to be united to a corporeal ſubſtance. Tertullian was, however, a moſt determined materialiſt. He believed the ſoul to be material, and begotten with the body. From the confidence with which he ſtates his opinions, it is inferred that he ſpoke the ſentiments of the Latin church.

It is not certainly known whether any of the ancient Unitarians treated of this ſubject. In the days of Origen, who died about the middle of the third century, there were Arabian Chriſtians who believed the ſoul to be mortal, to die with the body, and that it was raiſed again with it at the reſurrection. This father, who was a Platoniſt, and a perſon of diſtinguiſhed repute, is ſaid to have attended at a council with a view to bring them over to the contrary opinion, and to have ſucceeded in the attempt. About the time I am now ſpeaking, an opinion prevailed both in the Greek and Latin churches

churches, that the ſouls of good men reſided in certain receptacles ordained for that purpoſe until the reſurrection. Of the ſouls of the wicked little or nothing is ſaid by them.

This notion of a ſoul capable of conſcious exiſtence after the diſſolution of the body, after it had been held under a variety of forms among the early Chriſtians, and had paſſed through the hands of the ſchoolmen, whoſe peculiar fort it was, while they rendered notions more abſurd, to give them at the ſame time a greater appearance of conſiſtency, was made uſe of by the court of Rome for the purpoſes of gain. Under its direction it was determined that the ſoul ſhould be deemed immortal, but not immaterial. It was ſettled to be material, in order that it might be ſuſceptible of purgatorial pains. And it was decreed that by certain methods, of which the church had the ſole controul, the ſoul might immediately be admitted into heaven. This doctrine of ſeparate ſpirits being admitted into heaven, was not eſtabliſhed until the fourteenth century. It would have brought immenſe riches into the Pope's coffers, had it not been oppoſed by Martin Luther.

This intrepid reformer believed that the ſoul ſlept until the reſurrection, and makes uſe of this tenet in the belief of which he is ſaid to have died to confute the notions of a purgatory and ſaint worſhip.

ſhip. In one of his earlier works he ranks the opinion of the ſoul's immortality, and its being the ſubſtantial form of the body, among the monſtrous opinions to be found in the Roman dunghill of decretals. William Tyndall, the famous tranſlator of the bible into Engliſh, maintained the ſame opinion in his defence of Luther's tenets againſt Sir Thomas More's objections. He conſiders the doctrine of the ſleep of the ſoul, as the doctrine of the reformers in his time, and founded on the ſcriptures. Calvin violently oppoſed this opinion, and ſeems to have given a turn to the ſentiments of all who had forſaken the Romiſh communion. And we find that Tyndall himſelf made a recantation of his more early opinions on this ſubject, in which, however, are ſtrong marks of heſitation and reluctance.

The doctrine of the ſoul's immortality was omitted in all the early confeſſions of the reformed churches. It has ſince obtained a place in all of them. This diſtinction it acquired in conſequence of Calvin's interference. Had he not ſtood up its warm advocate, it is highly probable that it would have been univerſally diſcarded by the ſeparatiſts from the Romiſh church. We are not to think it the leſs an error becauſe Calvin held it; we have as much right to examine the matter as he had; we labour under fewer prejudices, and are bleſſed with far ſuperior advantages. Happy ſpecimens of the

futility

futility of his reaſonings may be ſeen in an excellent work entitled, "*An hiſtorical View of the Con-*"*troverſy on the State of the Soul*," by the late Archdeacon of Cleves, and the celebrated author of that invaluable work the Confeſſional. The evidence to be collected from this work, and from the late Biſhop of Carliſle's Appendix to his *Conſiderations on the Theory of Religion*, has overthrown the credit of the doctrine of an intermediate ſtate, or of a ſtate of conſcious enjoyment and happineſs between death and the reſurrection. Theſe able writers have ſhewn that it is the doctrine of the Scriptures, that men remain in a ſtate of inſenſibility until the reſurrection; that the ſoul while ſeparate from the body neither acts nor thinks. Thus was our future life ſhewn by theſe writers to depend in no way on the nature of our ſouls. Some time after, Dr. Prieſtley, with that intrepidity by which he is ſo much diſtinguiſhed, and which will ever endear his name to the friends of free enquiry, called in queſtion the exiſtence of the ſoul. He with his uſual ability and learning has contended that the brain is the ſeat of the ſentient principle, that it is the organ of thinking as the eye is that of ſeeing. It is ſingular enough that theologians ſhould witneſs with great coolneſs the attempts of Law and Blackburne to ſhew that the ſoul was of no uſe with regard to a future life, and yet teſtify ſuch violent reſentment at the endeavours of Dr. Prieſtley, to

ſhew that the notion of a ſoul is as groundleſs as the two church dignitaries had proved it to be uſeleſs. Notwithſtanding the unmeaning clamour that has been excited by the bigotted and the intereſted, the doctrine of an immaterial ſoul daily loſes ground, and, in conſequence of the greater attention paid to ſacred criticiſm, and the hiſtorical evidences of Chriſtianity, begins to be regarded as unſcriptural and ſuperfluous, as it is irrational.

I have now endeavoured to ſtate to you what were the principal doctrines taught by Chriſt and his Apoſtles.

Theſe I take to be,

1. That God is the all-powerful, all-wiſe, all-merciful Creator of the univerſe; that he exerciſes over it a conſtant providence; that he looks for and accepts of religious homage from his creatures. That this great Being is one perſon.

2. That the terms on which men are to be made partakers of his favour are repentance for ſin and obedience to his known will. That he accepts of theſe conditions from his own free choice and good pleaſure, not induced ſo to do from the conſideration of any payment or compenſation given him by any perſon whatever.

3. That

3. That we are to live hereafter ſolely in conſequence of God's raiſing us from the dead at the day of judgment, and that during the interval between death and the reſurrection, men are in a ſtate of inſenſibility, experiencing neither pleaſure nor pain.

Theſe doctrines I have endeavoured to prove from reaſon and ſcripture. I have alſo ſhewn how they became at length corrupted, and to give place to very groſs and pernicious errors, ſuch as, the doctrine of a trinity of perſons in the divine nature; the notion of a full and compleat payment having been made to God for the pardon of ſin and acceptance into his favour; and that of a ſoul capable of enjoying perfect happineſs in a ſtate of ſeparation from the body. The method I have taken, I think no one can cenſure; if, in following it, I have failed to make good the poſitions for which I have contended, I ſhall be thankful to any one who will prove that to be the caſe.

PART IV.

OF THE IMPORTANCE AND BENEFICIAL EFFECTS OF CHRISTIANITY ON UNITARIAN PRINCIPLES.

BECAUSE I have exhibited Chriſtianity ſtript of what are uſually called its myſteries, but which in reality are none elſe but groſs and palpable abſurdities; let it not be imagined, that this divine religion is rendered on that account the leſs valuable or the leſs intereſting.

1. Does not the divine nature afford ſufficient matter for ſublime and elevated contemplation for every purpoſe of piety, of conſolation, and hope, without the ſuppoſition o a trinity of perſons ſubſiſting in it? Is the power of the Almighty diminiſhed, becauſe he is ſuppoſed to be one? Are his wiſdom or his goodneſs circumſcribed, becauſe he does not neceſſarily or voluntarily ſubſiſt in three perſons? Is he leſs the object of adoration? Shall we have fewer motives to pleaſe and obey him? Is there leſs on that account to wonder and admire in the courſe of providence, and in the diſpenſations of his favour?

2. Is

2. Is it not information moſt highly to be rated, that the God who made and who governs us is great and good, and wiſe and merciful? Is it not intereſting to learn that God is well pleaſed with our ſervices, that he enjoins our conformity to his perfections, and our improvement in piety and virtue, and that he is well pleaſed with the advances we make? Is it not moſt valuable intelligence that the preſent ſtate is a ſtate of probation, a place in which we are trained up for everlaſting felicity; and that the good we do, and the excellence we acquire, draw after them conſequences that will endure to all eternity?

3. Can any diſcovery of greater importance be made, than that which informs us, that when we have lain in the grave for a great length of time, God will by the ſame power and from the ſame views of benevolence with which he created us, collect our ſcattered duſt, reſtore our long interrupted conſciouſneſs, and crown us with immortal life? It is only perſons whoſe minds have contracted a fantaſtic turn, that fancy any thing material to religion is overturned by the advocates of unitarianiſm, when they expoſe the puerile cumberſome machinery with which it appears clogged in all antiquated ſyſtems.

Unitarianiſm

Unitarianiſm does not narrow the grounds for piety and devotion, nor does it diminiſh or weaken the motives to a virtuous conduct.

1. Is the devotion of thoſe who have only one object of religious adoration, likely to be leſs fervent than that of thoſe whoſe devotion is divided between three? Have not the believers in the divine unity all the time which the trinitarians waſte in contemplating the ſubtilties relating to a plurality of perſons in the divine eſſence, to devote to the contemplation of the perfections of the one GOD? While the former are puzzling themſelves and confounding others about the union of the two natures in the perſon of Chriſt, how much are the latter better employed in ſtudying the virtues of their Saviour!

2. Does the doctrine which teaches us that our ſincere repentance muſt expiate our guilt, and that we are to be ſaved on account of our own good works, give any encouragement to the commiſſion of vice, or to remiſſneſs in duty? Becauſe we believe that nothing but contrition proportionable to our evil actions can wipe away their ſtain, are we the more likely to fall into ſin, or to live in the practice of it? Becauſe we hold that it is our good deeds alone that can ſave us, is it likely that we

ſhould

ſhould become more careleſs about performing any? Is it any encouragement to the wicked to believe that God will exact from the offender himſelf a puniſhment that is equal to his crime, and will not accept of any compenſation for it? The rational Chriſtian has here much the advantage over the believer in human ſyſtems. For while the one is calling forth all his ingenuity to ſhew how Jeſus paid an infinite price to the juſtice of the Father for the ſins of men, the other is treading the beaten path of earneſt, humble, perſevering endeavours to acquire thoſe virtues, in conſequence of which, He who was the God of Jeſus, "anointed him with "the oil of gladneſs above his fellows."

3. Are thoſe likely to make light of the goſpel, who place all their hopes of a future life upon it? Shall we be the leſs likely to govern our paſſions, and to reſtrain our appetites, beeauſe we believe that our powers of thinking depend on a part of our material frame, and our enjoying eternal life upon the reſurrection of our preſent bodies? Shall we on that account be the leſs diſpoſed to offer them up as "living ſacrifices, holy, acceptable unto "God, which is our reaſonable ſervice?" Are we the leſs dependent upon God, have we leſs occaſion to exerciſe confidence in him, becauſe we hold that our immortality depends on his good-will and pleaſure in raiſing us from the grave?

Finally,

Finally, I would aſk, Is the rational Chriſtian likely to prize the ſcheme of ſalvation leſs, becauſe it is free from abſurdities and agreeable to reaſon? Is he likely to be leſs under the influence of religion, becauſe it is made to depend on ſure principles?

Is he likely to be leſs generous, benevolent, and happy, becauſe he worſhips a God that has every perfection to inſpire gratitude, confidence, and love?

I refrain from the unpleaſant taſk of ſhewing how much tendency the contrary doctrines have to lead to unfavourable practical conſequences, and I wiſh I had known and heard of fewer inſtances in which this tendency has operated. There are, I am happy to think, numerous inſtances to which this obſervation does not extend.

With what little reaſon have thoſe been ranked with heathens and unbelievers, who hold the doctrines which are defended in this tract? There is certainly greater juſtice in claſſing thoſe with heathens, who hold, in oppoſition to unitarian doctrines, tenets, the origin of which may be traced up to heatheniſm. That the trinity was held by the heathens, and may be recognized in their worſhip, is acknowledged by Dr. Horſley. The notion of vicarious ſacrifices runs through all the religious ceremonies of heatheniſm; and that of the ſoul ſurviving

viving the body, it is notorious, was a heathen tenet. With greater juſtice then may unitarians retort the charge of heatheniſm and vain philoſophy upon their adverſaries. They maintain their own doctrines to be thoſe received by the Jews of old, what were confirmed by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, and what may be proved by their expreſs words. While the faith of their opponents is firſt to be met with in the writings of converts from the Platonic ſchool, is clothed in Platonic terms, and is ſupported by forced interpretations of detached paſſages of Scripture.

PART V.

A SHORT ACCOUNT OF UNITARIANISM, AND ITS PRESENT STATE.

THE firſt Jewiſh church at Jeruſalem was Unitarian. The more early Unitarians, and the circumſtances of their learning, and their priority to the Platonizing, or thoſe whom we call the orthodox fathers, have already been mentioned. In the third century Paul of Samoſata, biſhop of Antioch, made a conſpicuous figure as an unitarian, a man whoſe character even his enemies have not dared to traduce, and from whoſe account of him, it may be collected that he poſſeſſed many excellencies in which there is reaſon to believe they were deficient. Of the ſame perſuaſion were Photinus biſhop of Sirmium, and Marcellus biſhop of Ancyra. None of the works of theſe perſons have reached us, but their tenets and arguments are to be found in the writings of their adverſaries. We learn that beſides claiming to be the ſucceſſors of the Apoſtles, and the only faithful depoſitaries of their doctrines, they were remarkable for ſupporting their opinions by numerous quotations from Scripture. And it is

is ſaid of the works of Paul of Samoſata in particular, that there was ſcarce a page in them without citations out of the Old or New Teſtament.

After theſe we do not hear of any men of eminence among them. There were of the Jewiſh Chriſtians unitarians ſubſiſting in ſmall numbers in the time of Auſtin. And of the race of the gentiles there were unitarians until the ninth or tenth centuries. Whether the ſect became wholly extinct, until the ſame cauſe was revived, and ſet on foot at the Reformation, may well be doubted.

2. Some of the moſt learned of the reformers ſought an aſylum in Poland, and there taught the unitarian doctrines. Theſe men, it is acknowledged by their enemies, were perſons of great learning. They ſet up rules in explaining the ſcriptures, which drew forth high praiſes from the moſt eloquent of their opponents, and which have been adopted by commentators of the higheſt repute. It is worthy of note, that it was ſolely in conſequence of the ſtudy of the ſcriptures, that the leaders among the Poliſh divines adopted unitarian tenets.

John Biddle, to whoſe piety, and virtue, and knowledge of the ſcriptures, ample teſtimonies have been

been borne, introduced the unitarian doctrines firſt into England. Theſe ſentiments derived great luſtre from their having been adopted by Mr. Thomas Firmin, a citizen of London, held in high eſteem for his zeal in promoting all uſeful charities, and who was alſo the intimate friend of Archbiſhop Tillotſon, and of other great churchmen of his day. The great Locke, whoſe writings upon the human mind, upon government, and upon education, place him on the higheſt point of literary eminence, eſpouſed and patronized the ſame opinions. Newton, whom but to name is all that is neceſſary, was an unitarian.

The progreſs of unitarianiſm was for a time arreſted by the writings of Dr. Clarke, and a tribe of learned Arians. When this hereſy was moſt triumphant, the propheſy of the great Lardner is well known, "the pride of Arianiſm will have a fall." His own works, and the weight of his juſtly deſerved reputation as a critic, and as learned in church hiſtory, have ſerved eminently to verify the prediction. Poſſeſſed as he was of a mind the moſt fair and impartial, induſtrious in reſearches into primitive antiquity, and ſkilled in unravelling difficult queſtions both in the ſacred and in other writings beyond all competition, his letter on the Logos, which appeared in 1759, in which he

aſſerted

aſſerted the divine Unity, maintained the ſimple humanity of Chriſt, and controverted the perſonality of the Holy Ghoſt, produced the effects which might have been expected from ſuch a work coming from ſuch a perſon.

Since this period a new ſchiſm on unitarian grounds, threatening greater conſequences than any that have preceded, has ariſen in the church of England. Dr. Law, a biſhop of Carliſle, died a few years ago an avowed unitarian. The archdeacon of Cleves, who hath ſince departed this life, held the ſame opinions. Numbers of unitarians are known to be in the church, and the rulers dare not or chuſe not to give them any diſturbance. Among thoſe who have withdrawn from her communion, let it ſuffice to mention the names of Lindſey, of Diſney, of Jebb, of Wakefield, of Robertſon, of Evanſon, of Tyrrwhytt, of Matty, of Frend, of Dyer, of Palmer. The revolt of ſo great a number in an age of the complexion of the preſent, would ſeem portentous of great revolutions in eccleſiaſtical matters. I have by me ſermons by clergymen, urging in the ſtrongeſt manner the doctrine of the divine unity. Even from Oxford has iſſued forth a pamphlet attacking the Athanaſian creed; and the Chancellor of the univerſity of Cambridge has written with great ability

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in favour of eccleſiaſtical reformation. A ſurvey of the laſt forty years ſufficiently proves that the work of reformation goes on proſperouſly. Let none be uneaſy becauſe it advances ſlowly; the time of acceleration approaches; it is our duty to haſten its arrival by every lawful means in our power.

Among the diſſenters, where may be expected leſs of bias, and where certainly greater attention is paid to theology, the revolution has been more general. Several of their congregations are wholly unitarian. In all the congregations termed rational there are unitarians, and in ſome a conſiderable proportion, and they will certainly be acknowledged not to conſtitute the leaſt intelligent members of theſe reſpectable ſocieties.

It cannot fail to ſtrike every one that there is prevalent at the preſent time a great averſion to religious reformation. This upon examination will be found not to ariſe from a perſuaſion of the rectitude of the creeds and forms eſtabliſhed among us, but from a ſpecies of ſcepticiſm as to all matters of this nature. If we ſeek the origin of this ſcepticiſm, we ſhall find it in the diſcountenance ſhewn by our eccleſiaſtical and lay ſuperiors to every kind of enquiry.

The

The rational Chriſtian, while he has been concerned to exhibit revelation at it is ſtated in the genuine records of it, finds that in doing this he happily conſults the ſuperior accuracy of conceiving and judging of things which diſtinguiſhes the preſent times; as well as that ſpirit of free inveſtigation which characterizes the age in which we live.

By ſhewing that religion need not ſhrink from the teſt of enlightened reaſon, he renders ſervices which will be held in high eſtimation by thoſe who know to aſcertain the importance of religious principles in their influence upon ſociety, and upon individual happineſs, and who are ſenſible of the pernicious effects of ſcepticiſm in both theſe reſpects. Our modern faſhionable theologians pay no regard to this change. The diſpoſition to enquire into matters, rather than take them upon truſt, has never been more inſulted; implicit faith never more inſiſted upon; nor were ever more pains taken to bear down the ſpirit of enquiry. The puerile fopperies of the dark ages have been laid as much ſtreſs on as if they ſtill were capable of amuſing; the abſurdities of thoſe times have been exhibited with a pomp of manner which would only ſuit with their power of ſtill exciting amazement, and quibbles bearing the ſame date have been propounded with an air of aſſurance calculated to make us believe that he who deals them out expects them

them to be admitted as ſatisfactory. It muſt be owned that nothing can be more conſiſtent with the ſpirit, temper and principles of the hierarchy than the conduct of the perſons in queſtion; theſe are hoſtile to enquiry and to improvements of all ſorts, and ſo are thoſe who have been of late preferred in the church. Its preſent heads declare to the compilers of the American liturgy, that they "ſaw *with grief* that two confeſſions of our Chriſtian "faith, reſpectable for their antiquity, have been "entirely laid aſide" in their ſervice. Suppreſs, reader, thine aſtoniſhment if thou canſt, when thou art told that one of thoſe *reſpectable* confeſſions is the Athanaſian creed with its damnatory clauſes, and *of which* long ago good Archbiſhop Tillotſon wiſhed us *well rid.* See the extract from the letter of the Archbiſhops of Canterbury and York to the convention held at Wilmington in Delaware, Oct. 1786, in Mr. Lindſey's Vindiciæ Prieſtleianæ, p. 24. Whether this declaration of war againſt enquiry will fix the clergy in their attachment to the eſtabliſhed doctrines, and make them zealous and able defenders of them, or be productive of that imbecility of mind, and of other bad effects uſually attendant on reſtraints upon the exerciſe of the rational faculties; whether it will lengthen or ſhorten the duration of our eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment, it muſt be left to time fully to diſcloſe. He who

 wiſhes

wiſhes the overthrow of uſeleſs and oppreſſive inſtitutions, and the final triumph of reaſon and freedom, will ſee nothing diſcouraging in this turn which things have taken.

CONCLUSION.

CONCLUSION.

HE, my countrymen, who has been now addreſſing you, had no motive to give himſelf the trouble of writing, nor to be beholden to you for your attention to wha the has ſubmitted to your conſideration, but a conviction the moſt deeply rooted, that the ſentiments for which he has contended are more conſonant to truth than thoſe which you now profeſs, and that the knowledge of them rightly improved elevates the condition of man. What made him addreſs you in particular was, a belief that we owe ſomething to our native ſoil, that it is becoming to ſhew ſome marks of gratitude to thoſe who befriended us in our tender years. Hence the writer of theſe ſheets was led to ſteal ſome time from favourite purſuits, purſuits more reputable in the eye of the world, as well as more productive of preſent advantages, in order to attempt the diffuſion of important information among thoſe whom he conceived greatly needed it. Had his efforts been likely to terminate in the acquiſition of a benefice, or in drawing down upon

him the notice and ſmiles of our leading men, he does not ſay that even then you ought to infer his motives not to have been pure; but certainly they would not have been ſo free from ſuſpicion as they muſt now be acknowledged to be, when he muſt conſider himſelf as peculiarly fortunate, if the obloquy and abuſe he receives, be not exactly proportioned to the ſucceſs of his efforts. Being conſcious of theſe feelings and views, he thinks himſelf entitled to a patient and attentive hearing. If the doctrine he has laid before you, appear to you to be true, be not afraid to adopt it becauſe ſome may perſuade you that you will offend God by it. Let it be impreſſed upon your minds that this tract was not written, nor came it into your hands by *chance*; there is a *providence* in all theſe matters; we ought to diſcover *the hand of God* in them. Conſider well, therefore, the treatment it deſerves. If you deem its contents to be juſt, give it all the countenance and ſupport you can. By exerting a little reſolution and firmneſs, you may render yourſelves ſhining lights in the world, the parents of a numerous race of enlightened Chriſtians, the firſt in your ſeveral vicinities of a long ſeries of perſons diſtinguiſhed by the purity of their doctrines, as well as the purity of their manners. Your deciſion may have a happy influence on the religious ſtate of your country, and on that of the world. Diſdain then the threats of thoſe who would repreſent you as objects

objects of the divine vengeance, becauſe you reject their tenets. People who talk in this manner are in want of arguments. Be aſſured that you will never diſpleaſe God by the honeſt and aſſiduous exerciſe of the faculties which he has given you. It is only by neglecting to exerciſe them, and by tamely ſurrendering your judgments to be guided by thoſe of others, that you can offend him. Our opinions, if we have been impartial in adopting them, are innocent.

If, therefore, the reaſons now laid before you, appear to you to be deciſive in favour of the cauſe in ſupport of which they have been advanced, think it not a light matter to remain ſilent, as if you were ſtill in ignorance. This is a conduct which no party can approve, it is unworthy of reaſonable beings, and moſt aſſuredly diſpleaſing to God. By profeſſing in a manly and open, but at the ſame time in a meek and becoming manner, your ſentiments, you will not only ſerve the cauſe of truth, but be rendered more happy in yourſelves. The prevalence of juſt notions in religion will make men better Chriſtians, as they will then have nothing to attend to but the attainment of the Chriſtian virtues and diſpoſitions. Our religion will gain ground among unbelievers at home, and extend its conqueſts among nations that are ſtrangers to the Chriſtian name.

It would therefore ſeem, that though an unitarian ſhould find himſelf to ſtand alone in the diſtrict or neighbourhood in which he lives, he is not on that account to ſit ſtill. He ſhould beſtir himſelf, and invite his aſſociates to examine as he has done. If he enjoys greater peace of mind, more pleaſing reflections, more exquiſite and exalted pleaſures in religious exerciſes, and feels ſtronger motives to univerſal goodneſs, than before he changed his religious ſentiments, theſe are ſo many obligations under which he is laid to endeavour to induce others to give them a ſerious conſideration. If he be at the head of a family, he ſhould hold religious worſhip in it, and give free admittance to any diſpoſed to join him. He ſhould uſe ſome unitarian forms of prayer, and furniſh himſelf with a collection of rational ſermons. In a neighbourhood where there are ſeveral unitarian families, they ſhould unite and follow the ſame rules.

Meetings alſo might be held to diſcuſs theological ſubjects, into which all inquiſitive perſons who deſire it ſhould be admitted. The Chriſtianity that would thus be learnt, would have far greater influence on the practice, than that which conſiſts in mere attendance upon eſtabliſhed forms.

Being about to take my leave of the reader, I would remind him that life is ſhort, and therefore

not to defer an examination into theſe ſubjects; and that though the practice of religion is all that is important, right ſentiments are not matters of ſmall moment, as the practice muſt be defective in proportion as theſe are erroneous. God will pardon error in conduct as well as in judgment, when the effect of unavoidable ignorance. But in neither the one or the other will it be deemed innocent, if the ignorance that was the cauſe of it be the effect of remiſſneſs. To my unitarian reader I would ſay, if you have reaſon to conclude on good grounds that you cheriſh thoſe notions of God, of your duty, and of a future life, which Jeſus and his Apoſtles inculcated, unadulterated by the corruptions of men, remember the obligations under which you are brought to excell in all the virtues and graces of the goſpel, in piety towards God and benevolence to man. Is the God you worſhip a more worthy object? Are your notions of a virtuous conduct more conſiſtent? Is your hope of a future life placed on more firm foundations? Do you believe on good grounds that you have the ſuperiority in theſe ſeveral reſpects over other Chriſtians? Let it appear in your behaviour that this great Being occupies your thoughts more, that you regard him more in all your ways, that you pay greater attention to your conduct, and act more under the conviction of another and a better life to come,

come, than thoſe whom you regard as having fallen into unhappy miſtakes as to theſe important matters. Farewell; "I commend you to GOD, and to the "word of his grace, which is able to build you up, "and to give you an inheritance among all them "which are ſanctified."

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

PART I.

THERE is an hypotheſis to which I have not adverted, as being little known among the perſons for whoſe uſe I propoſed to write, but which has a conſiderable number of partizans among the diſſenters, and probably ſome in the eſtabliſhed church, I mean *low Arianiſm:* I call it low, in oppoſition to the *high Arianiſm* of Dr. Clarke.

The claſs of low Arians comprehends perſons of very different opinions. Some hold the ſoul of Jeſus Chriſt to have been a great ſupernatural ſpirit, who under GOD created the univerſe. Others maintain that he created the ſolar ſyſtem only. Others think that he created no more than this world, or rather that he faſhioned it, and rendered

dered it habitable. All theſe allow him a very conſiderable ſhare in the conduct of providence, at leaſt as it reſpects this world. Others, who would paſs for Arians, aſcribe to him none of theſe works, but merely maintain that his ſoul is of a higher order than that of human ſouls, and that it pre-exiſted for ſome indefinite period before it united itſelf to a human body.

Of this ſyſtem I would obſerve,

1. That had the fact of the union of a ſuper-angelic ſpirit with the body of an infant been true, it would have been ſtated in the Scriptures in the moſt explicit manner, and never would have been left to be collected from a few texts, which are taken in their ſtrict literal ſenſe with as little reaſon as thoſe which all proteſtants deem to be figurative, on which the Catholics build their doctrine of tranſubſtantiation. This curious fact alſo, as being ſo different from any thing before known in the world, and as being the greateſt of miracles, the reaſons for it, we may be aſſured, would have been given at large, and the writers of the New Teſtament, like its modern defenders, would have been ever recurring to it.

2. A doctrine

2. A doctrine which has ſo much the appearance of being abſurd and contradictory, required to to be eſtabliſhed by evidence proportionably ſtrong, by direct poſitive evidence, whereas no ſuch evidence is alledged; all that is advanced being in the way of inference.

3. If it be an article of the Chriſtian creed, it is by far the moſt incomprehenſible one. It is the moſt expenſive part of the apparatus neceſſary to effect our redemption. What are its uſes? Does it not deſtroy the effect of our Saviour's example, and flatly contradict the declaration of the writer to the Hebrews, who ſays, that it behoved him to be made in *all things like his brethren?*

4. The eſpouſers of this doctrine ſay, that Chriſt, had he been a mere man, would not have been competent to the great work he had to execute, the difficult part he had to act, and the wiſe inſtructions which he had in commiſſion to deliver. But he was qualified, as they themſelves muſt acknowledge, for theſe things, in conſequence of the divine gifts that were imparted to him for this very purpoſe. Their ſuppoſition is then only brought in to account for effects for which there exiſts another allowed adequate cauſe. Their ſcheme is chargeable therefore with multiplying cauſes unneceſſarily, contrary to the eſtabliſhed rules of philoſophizing.

5. Had

5. Had the only qualification of Jeſus for fulfilling the arduous objects of his miniſtry been his poſſeſſing a ſuper-angelic ſpirit, I am apprehenſive it would have proved utterly defective. For allowing the ſuppoſition of immaterial ſouls to be a true one; are not human bodies exactly fitted and adapted for the ſouls that are lodged in them? Are they not vehicles ſuited to the powers of theſe ſouls? Would a reptile with the ſoul of Newton, while he had organs no way different from another reptile, be any other than a reptile ſtill? Would the animal be rendered any way ſuperior by ſuch an appendage? A human body would cramp the operations of a ſuper-angelic ſpirit, and allow no ſcope for the exerciſe of its great powers. Can there be a ſtronger preſumption againſt the doctrine?

6. It is ſaid of Jeſus, that "he grew in wiſdom "and in favour with God and man." How is this conſiſtent with his being a ſuper-angelic ſpirit? Did the powers of this great ſpirit lie latent? Or were they curtailed ſo as to place it on a level with common ſouls? Where then was the uſe of its being impriſoned in a mortal body? How is the doctrine to be reconciled to the wiſdom of God, which makes uſe of the moſt ſimple cauſes to produce the moſt important effects?

7. On

7. On what principles conſiſtent with this hypotheſis is our Saviour's temptation, be it a reality or be it a viſion, to be explained? How could a ſuper-angelic ſpirit, who made this univerſe, or the ſolar ſyſtem, or even this world only, be tempted by a few earthly kingdoms?

8. Did it comport with the ſuppoſed high nature of Chriſt to dread death, as we know he did? He ought rather to have rejoiced in the diſſolution of the vehicle in which his grand ſoul was impriſoned.

9. The abettors of this ſyſtem, even thoſe of the loweſt order, are ſhocked at Chriſt's being repreſented as a *mere man*, and yet they are diſpleaſed if we do not allow that on their ſyſtem he was a *man*. What is the diſtinction between a *man* and a *mere man?* A being may, it ſeems, be a man without being a mere man. But a man he certainly was not on the Arian ſcheme, but a great celeſtial ſpirit having a human body.

10. Is it not rather remarkable that there have been none of the abettors of the low Arian ſcheme, however reſpectable and eminent in other branches of knowledge, who have been deeply verſed in primitive antiquity, nor who made ſacred criticiſm their

their ſtudy? But they ſay, 'we care not what ſen-'timents the fathers were of.' But they believe their ſentiments to have been held by the Apoſtles, and if by the Apoſtles, by the followers of the Apoſtles. There muſt have been a period during which theſe ſentiments continued in the Chriſtian church, and at the end of which they were abandoned. Have any attempted to mark out its limits? It is ſtrange if no trace of it can be diſcovered in eccleſiaſtical hiſtory. Unitarians, it is confeſſed, there were in the ſecond century, who were men of the greateſt learning; and though they ſoon diſappeared, being borne down by the philoſophizing biſhops, the common people to a late period retained this perſuaſion. But all this while hiſtory is totally ſilent as to any thing like *low Arianiſm*.

11. Would it not be more conſiſtent then in rational enquirers to diſcard this improbable tenet, which accords ſo ill with reaſon, and with the ſimplicity of the goſpel, as a leſs luxuriant branch of the ſame ſtock, to which belong the trinity, tranſubſtantiation, original ſin, &c.?

12. I do not think it right for people who merely believe that the ſpirit which animated the body of Jeſus pre-exiſted, to call themſelves Arians, ſince they

they adopt all the general reaſonings of unitarians, feel all their difficulties, and would be any thing but unitarians, and who ſeem to retain the pre-exiſtence, that they may not, as it were, break wholly with their old prejudices. If the unitarians are to be termed Socinians, theſe ſhould be called Socinianizers.

13. This laſt-mentioned kind of Arianiſm, which till the preſent century was never heard of, one would think has little to boaſt of in point of orthodoxy over proper unitarianiſm; yet are its abettors careſſed and embraced by thoſe who ſtand aloof from, and who will hardly have any connection with the advocates of the unitarian faith. To an indifferent ſpectator this muſt be matter of amuſement. It ſhews how faſt men will cling to a little abſurdity, even when they have diſmiſſed the greateſt part of it, and how averſe they are to become altogether rational in religious matters.

14. Whenever I think of this ſyſtem which makes the ſoul of Jeſus to have created the univerſe, the ſolar ſyſtem, or the world, and its union with the infant of Mary, it brings to my mind the union of the ſoul of Newton with a horſe or a ſheep. If the idea ſhock that the mind which *unravelled* the ſyſtem of the world ſhould be thus lodged, how much

much greater is the violence done to our reaſon, when it is ſuppoſed that ſo tranſcendant and glorious a being as he muſt have been who *created* the ſyſtem ſhould be the animating principle of a human body!

PART II.

AMONG Chriſtians of the more free and enlighted ſort, a middle ſcheme reſpecting the ſufferings and death of Chriſt, as well as reſpecting his perſon, has met with numerous and able advocates.

1. Dr. Taylor expoſes very ſucceſsfully the idea of pardoning the guilty for the ſake of the ſufferings of the innocent. 'It is,' he ſays, 'more 'contrary to juſtice and equity to acquit the guilty 'and to puniſh the innocent, than only to acquit 'the guilty and to ſuffer the innocent to go unpu-'niſhed.' See Scrip. Doc. p. 97. This is a propoſition which no ſophiſtry can invalidate; and yet the Doctor himſelf loſes ſight of it when he tells us, p. 102, 'That GOD, on account of the ſacrifice 'which Jeſus offered to him, (as being the moſt 'proper method of communicating to us the riches 'of his grace) thought fit to grant unto mankind,

corrupt

'corrupt and wicked, the forgiveneſs of ſin, and to 'erect a new diſpenſation furniſhed with all proper 'means to draw us from ſin unto GOD, and to 'bring us to the poſſeſſion of immortality.'

Are forgiveneſs of ſin, and erecting a new diſpenſation, ſuch as that of the goſpel was, meaſures right and fit in themſelves? If they are, why ſhould it be ſuppoſed that a Being of abſolute juſtice and of unlimited benevolence, needs any motives to adopt them?* If the evidence of the divine miſſion of Chriſt, and his reſurrection, could have been made ſufficiently ſtrong without his ſuffering and dying, would Dr. Taylor have ſaid, that he muſt have ſuffered and died in order to induce GOD to pardon ſin, and to introduce the Chriſtian diſpenſation into the world? It is however a more ſerious query, How is the perfect benevolence of the Deity to be vindicated, if the Doctor's repreſentation be well founded?

2. The ſame writer admits, that a ſinner when penitent is in the fitteſt ſtate to receive pardon, and that GOD is readily diſpoſed to forgive ſuch; and that were the offender and the offended the only

* It is with pleaſure that I learn that the ſubject of the Divine Placability will ſhortly be profeſſedly treated upon by a friend, who alſo propoſes to animadvert upon the notions contained in a ſet of *Sermons* on the *Atonement*, by the late Dr. Caleb Evans, of Briſtol.

parties concerned, to pardon on repentance he allows would be right. In anſwer to the queſtion, 'What need is there for the atonement of Chriſt?' he rather inſinuates than aſſerts, 'that God as go-'vernor of the world, in order to diſcourage ſin, 'ought not to pardon the penitent without regard 'to ſome other conſideration, ſuch as that of the 'obedience and death of Chriſt.' God, then, it would ſeem, is not to do what it would be right for him to do, were the offender and the offended the only parties concerned. Is it not rather a ſituation that degrades the ever-bleſſed God, in which he is put by Dr. Taylor? The Doctor would make him thus addreſs the offender: 'Indeed I am con-'ſcious I ought to forgive you, ſeeing you are fully 'ſenſible of your error; but I cannot do what your 'particular caſe calls upon me to do, or I ſhall bring 'my government into diſorder; but there is Jeſus, 'he muſt, though a juſt perſon, die to exemplify, to 'confirm, and to promote the propagation of the 'goſpel: I will regard his death in ſuch a light, as 'that it ſhall make up, what your penitence wants 'of being ſufficient to warrant my pardoning you.' I am utterly at a loſs to ſee, how this contrivance reflects honour upon God, as well as to perceive the manner in which it operates to diſcourage ſin. If it does not impeach the mercy of God, it certainly reflects upon his wiſdom. How does it tally with that perfection, that he ſhould have made the conſtitution

conſtitution of things ſuch, that he cannot follow the dictates of juſtice with reſpect to an individual, without endangering the moral order of his creation? Was it a work beyond his ſkill to appoint things ſo, that mercy might be extended where it is proper, without any inconvenience ariſing upon the whole?

3. As to what Dr. Taylor ſays of this 'repentance 'not only procuring us pardon for our ſins, but, in 'conſequence of the death of Chriſt, eternal life and 'unſpeakable glories;' I can only obſerve, that it is aſſerted without ſufficient proof. Repentance can only be ſuppoſed to remove the guilt of paſt ill-conduct, of itſelf it can entitle us to no poſitive reward. If the repentance be ſound, theſe proceed from that natural love which GOD has to us as his creatures, in the way of which we are put by repentance, after we had by our ſins gone out of it. There will no doubt differences be made in a future world, and he who dies penitent, with good diſpoſitions only, without having had the opportunity to form new habits, cannot hope for the ſame diſtinctions with thoſe who have adorned their profeſſions by a long ſeries of acts of piety, and deeds of virtue. The Doctor was not aware that by repreſenting the ſufferings and death of Chriſt as, in any ſenſe, the procuring cauſe of pardon and a future life, he was admitting the very principle from

from which proceeded the evil conſequences which he has expoſed in ſo maſterly a manner in the work already referred to, the very principle which gave riſe to the ill-ſounding and pernicious jargon in which ſchoolmen and ſcholaſtic divines have involved this ſubject.